

6
4105. b.
6

SOME
LETTERS,

Which passed between a

YOUNG GENTLEMAN,

Designed for

Holy Orders;

AND HIS

UNCLE, a CLERGYMAN,

Concerning Conformity to the

CHURCH of ENGLAND. K

With an Appendix, by the EDITOR.

Speak every man truth with his Neighbour. Eph. iv. 25.

*He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What
is the chaff to the wheat? Saith the Lord. Jer. xxiii. 28.*

L O N D O N:

Printed, and Sold, by JAMES WAUGH, at the *Turk's-Head*, in
Lombard-street, and WILLIAM FENNER, at the *Angel and Bi-*
ble, in *Pater-Noster-Row*. 1758.

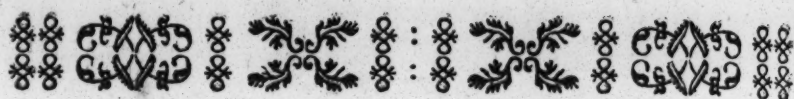


48
4 8 <
968

Advertisement.

IN the *Appendix*, the reader may find an account of the writers of these *letters*; how they came into the hands of the *Editor*; and why he has published them. —

But the *Editor* chooses not to be known: much less to name the deceased clergyman, or his nephew; between whom, this correspondence was, for some time, carried on.



CONTENTS.

	Page
L ETTER I. from the Uncle.	i
LETTER I. from the Nephew.	13
LETTER II. from the same.	27
LETTER III. from the same.	43
LETTER IV. from the same.	60
LETTER V. from the same.	87
LETTER VI. from the same.	113
LETTER II. from the Uncle.	146
An Appendix by the Editor.	151



LETTER I.

From the U N C L E.

Dear Cousin,

 Got home, last saturday; and am returned, I thank God, in a much better state of health, than I was in, when I went from home. The occasion of my returning, sooner than I proposed, when I last wrote to you, was this ****.

Yesterday, your Brother called upon me, in his way home. He dined with me; and, about five, took his leave, proposing to reach home, that evening. He told me he had been detained, two days, on his journey, at C****, about that troublesome affair, which you know of, and that it was now settled to his satisfaction. It was agreed to, by both parties, that *****

B

But

But to come to the chief business of this letter. When I had asked him concerning your health, O Uncle, said he, you have lost your parson. You will imagine, I was not a little startled at such an answer, and thrown out, in such a blunt manner; which he perceiving, presently added, Sir, be not surprized: the man is alive, and in health; but the parson is no more. "How do you mean, Cousin?" Why Sir, to be plain with you, my brother told me, in so many words, that he was determined, never to put on the gown; that the objections, which he hath, against the terms, required by law, to a man's being admitted into *orders*, and officiating in *the Church of England*, appeared to him, utterly unanswerable; and that, according to his present way of thinking and judging, he cannot justify, his complying with them; that he could not reconcile such compliance with the sense, which he had, of his duty to God, with his own innocence, and the peace of his own mind.

This account gave me no small concern and uneasiness, which I shall not be able to
rid

rid my mind of, 'till I hear from you, and am fully acquainted with the reasons, upon which you are come to such a resolution; (perhaps not then :) and the particular objections, you have, against engaging in that honourable office, and employment of life, for which you were designed, by that good man, your father, now among the blessed; and in the discharge of which, he pleased himself, with the hopes, of seeing you, one day, acquit yourself, worthily, and with applause. But it was not the will of God, it should be so: for, before you were full eleven years old, you lost the monitor and guide of your youth, the best of fathers; and I, the kindest of brothers. As he had constituted me your guardian, he acquainted me, on his death-bed, that his intention was, to have brought you up for the *ministry of the Church*, and desired that, in pursuance of it, you might be sent to the university, at fifteen, if you should live to that age. The care of you thus devolving upon me, by his appointment, I readily accepted the trust: and I am sure, you will, yourself, be my witness, with what fidelity and care I discharged it, not

B 2

only

only in managing the fortune, which your father had left you; but likewise, in giving you, from time to time, the best instruction and advice, I could, relating to your studies, and your moral conduct, and that not with any *patruity*, but with the tenderness of a *father*; and with the freedom and openness of a friend. This I mention, that you may conceive, how great my disappointment must be, if you should decline the service of the *Church*; which I had still in view: not to upbraid you, nor to put you in mind of any obligations to me; far from it; for, on the other hand, I must own, that, as the relation I stand in, to you, obliged me to do what lay in my power, to serve you; so you were worthy of all my care and concern about you. Your towardly genius and disposition, the unwearied diligence and application, with which you prosecuted your studies, and the proficiency you made, in them, deserved all the assistance, and encouragement, that I could give you. And to see, when you left the university, (now three years since) that you answered the utmost expectations, which I had, beforehand, formed of you; though these were
not

not low nor small; to see you come out, so well furnished, and qualified for filling up any station in the *Church*, that should be assigned you, with honour to the *sacred profession*, and reputation to yourself, this gave me the greatest pleasure and satisfaction. But *now*; the greater notion I had of your accomplishments, and the higher my expectations, from them, of your future usefulness, in the *Church*, were raised; the greater must be my disappointment, and my concern arising from it: should those accomplishments never be employed in that service; to prepare yourself for which, you spent so much time, and took so much pains. But, as well qualified as you were, I now wish you had continued some time longer at the university, or when you left it, had removed into the country, instead of going to *London*; where, I suppose, you have conversed with some, who have raised those scruples in your mind, and laid those difficulties in your way, which you find so hard to get over.

I would not have you think, from what I have here said, that I am angry with you;
or

6 L E T T E R I.

or that I entertain, in my mind, any unkind resentment, any one thought to your prejudice, on this occasion. I am persuaded that, if you have taken up such a resolution, it is owing not to humour; nor to any low, contemptuous thoughts of the *clerical Function*; nor to an apprehension of any restraints, which it may lay upon you, in your behaviour; nor of any pains, which you will be obliged to take; or any difficulties and discouragements, that you may undergo, in discharging the duties, which belong to it; —but that it proceeds, according to your brother's account, from a good principle, and an honest heart. And whatever you do, or refuse to do, from such a principle, it shall never lessen the affection and esteem I have for you. I shall never be displeased with, nor think the worse of, any man, for acting an honest, upright part, though the motive, or reason of his acting thus, or otherwise, may be grounded on some wrong notion, some mistaken apprehension of the case; or of some circumstances, that attend it. I would not, for the world, endeavour by any means, to influence, or by any considerations to persuade, you to do any thing,
but

but what is consistent with the character of an honest man. No! my dear Harry, follow, in the name of God, the reason and sense of your own uncorrupted and unprejudiced mind, wherever, and as far as ever, these shall lead you (*a*). Only let me advise you, not to be rash and hasty, in a matter of so great importance. See that your judgment be well informed; take care not only that your notions of right and wrong, lawful and unlawful in general, be true and clear; but likewise that they be justly applied to the case in hand. Have you thoroughly weighed, and considered it, in every view? Have you fully studied the point? Have you carefully read what hath been wrote, on both sides of the question? And, upon the whole, are you sure, your scruples and objections are well-grounded? If you cannot truly answer these questions, to yourself, in the affirmative, let me prevail with you, to think the matter over again. You can hardly use too much thought and care, in a case, wherein your determining, this way

(*a*) Λογὴ ὁρθῶς πείθεσθαι, καὶ Θεῶ, ταυτόν ἐστὶ. Hierocl.
in Carm. Pythag. Carm. 28.

8 L E T T E R I.

way, or that, must greatly affect the whole state and course of the future part of your life.

You see, *Cousin*, that, though my legal guardianship over you hath ceased, and been at an end, for some years past; I yet take upon me, to give you advice, and caution; and, I am sure, you will not think me impertinent, or too busy, in so doing. Such is the natural affection, which I have for you, that I cannot help concerning myself, in every thing of moment, that relates to you, and has a connection with your interest; and this, you must be sensible of. Why then did you not open your mind, and communicate your thoughts, to me? Why did you not advise with me, before you came to such a resolution? I must tell you, that, I think, I had a right to be so much taken notice of; as to be consulted with, by you, in an affair of this nature. And that, as I was not, I have some reason to complain, on this account; especially, as I never discouraged you, by a reserved temper, or a distant, forbidding behaviour,
from

from communicating your mind to me, upon any occasion, with the greatest freedom.

But, I hope, you are not so fixed, in your resolution, but that you may be moved, and be persuaded yet to alter your mind, upon a proper address to your reason and understanding. The case of *clerical conformity*, upon a just representation of it, may perhaps be made to appear to you, in a very different light from what you now see it in; and you may be brought to think, and judge, of it, otherwise than you now do, and that upon rational conviction. Now this is what I would attempt, I will not say engage, to do; if you will but give me an opportunity. Let me know the difficulties, which lie in your way; and I will try to remove them.

I have been now, two and thirty years, in *orders*; and, for a considerable part of that time, my situation was such, that it laid me under a peculiar and more than common engagement, to study the controversy between the *Church* and *Dissenters*; and acquaint myself with the arguments, on both sides. And, upon the whole, I think,

C

that

that many of the objections, made by these, against *conforming to the Church of England, as by law established*, may fairly be retorted upon them; and the things, which they find fault with, justified upon that principle, allowed and maintained by themselves, *namely*, “ that there should be some *Church-estabishment*, in every *christian* nation.” And all their objections, taken together, however they may show the reasonableness and expediency of making some alterations in the doctrine, discipline, or common service of the *Church*, and so far may deserve notice and regard; yet do not affect any thing *capital*, in the *constitution* of it; nor have they been able to make it appear, that any essential part of that, is bad, or wrong; that there is any thing in it, which hath, in itself, a tendency, to frustrate the end and design of the appointment of the *christian ministry*: so that, I cannot see any thing, in the terms of *ministerial conformity*, that is inconsistent with any moral, or religious obligation; any thing, but what a man may, innocently, and with a good conscience, comply with; even while some things remain, as they are; which he would be glad

glad to see altered, or wholly laid aside. That there are several things in the *Church*, which want mending, and which I should be glad to see mended, especially in the doctrine of it, is what I freely own. But I would not here anticipate what I may have occasion to observe, when you have informed me, what the particular objections are, which appear to you unanswerable.

I would have you open your mind freely, and without reserve. I believe, you are satisfied, from the knowledge you have of me, that I am no bigot to any *sect*, or *party of christians*. I can bear to have my notions examined; yea, and contradicted, without being in a passion. For I think the *ministers of Christ*, especially, should be, as he was; and as he commands all his disciples to be; *meek and lowly in heart*: and, according to the apostle's exhortation to *Timothy*, "in meekness, instruct those, that oppose themselves." You need not then be under any check, or restraint, in declaring, to me, the real sentiments of your mind; but what a regard to *truth*, and *decency*, lays upon you. While you maintain this regard; and,

I am sure, you will religiously maintain it; lay your objections, as strong, as you can; urge them as far, as you think, they will fairly go. If I answer them to your satisfaction, and remove your present doubts and scruples, I shall rejoice; as having done a piece of good service, good in more respects than one.—If not, if I should not succeed herein, to my wish, I will press the affair no farther; but quietly leave you to your own determination; to follow, without any disturbance from me, the dictates and sentiments of your own mind (*b*). And may the blessing of heaven rest upon you, may the father of lights give you wisdom, to direct you, in all your ways.

My dear Harry,

Farewel.

J. M.

(*b*) Hor. Lib. II. ep. ii. I bone, quo virtus tua te vocat, i pede fausto.



LETTER I.

From the N E P H E W.

Reverend and Honoured Sir,

 T HE sense, which I have, of the
 duty and respect, that I owe you,
 will not allow me, to conceal
 from you, what yet (I fear) will give you
 some uneasiness, when I have acquainted
 you with it; and, perhaps, abate something
 of that kind regard, that tender, parental
 affection, which you always discovered to-
 wards me; and which I esteem, as the
 greatest blessing of my life; next to the fa-
 vour of the Almighty, and the approbation
 of my own mind:—the grievous apprehensi-
 on of which consequences hath, for a con-
 siderable time past, kept me from commu-
 nicating my sentiments, to you, upon a ve-
 ry important affair; and my present purpose,
 relating to it. But I cannot, any longer,
 bear

bear the thoughts of being wanting, in any proper expression of my duty to you; as I should be, did I not acquaint you, to whom I am more obliged than to all the world besides, with every thing of consequence that concerns me.

When I had the pleasure of spending some weeks with you, in the country, last summer, you know, Sir, you pressed me with some earnestness, to enter into *orders*. And, when you asked me, what was my reason for deferring it, so long, I remember, my answer was, “ that I thought I was “ not, in any sufficient degree, qualified for “ the discharge of the *sacred*, important “ function, of a *minister of the gospel*.” And, therefore, was willing to take more time, to prepare myself, by getting my head, and heart, better furnished for it, which was the truth; but not the whole truth; — the true reason, but not the only reason. For I had then, and for a considerable time before, some scruples, in my mind, about the lawfulness of complying with the terms of *clerical conformity*, which have been growing upon me, ever since. The more I read,
the

the more closely I think, on this subject, and the more freely I debate the case with myself, the stronger the objections I have against officiating, as a *minister*, in the *Church of England*, appear to me, and the more confirmed I am, in my own mind, never to do it. I cannot resist the force of them.

I assure you, Sir, that I should be glad to employ the abilities, which God hath given me, and to spend the remainder of my days, in the public service of *religion*; in promoting the best and highest interests of mankind; but I am utterly precluded from it, in the *Church of England*, by the terms of admission into the *ministry*, in that *Church*, established by the civil magistrate. My way is shut up, 'till that bar be removed; for it is an eternal law of reason, as well as a precept of christianity, *not to do evil, that good may come*; as it would be *evil and wicked*, in me, to conform to those terms, while they appear to me, in the light, in which they do, at present; while the sense and judgment of my mind, in the case, continue the same, that they now are. It would be
gross

gross dishonesty, plain prevarication with God and man.

I hope that, through the grace of God, I shall make it my first care, my principal concern, as long as I live, to keep my mind from being corrupted, and my judgment from being perverted, by any prejudice, or wrong bias, to see that I rightly understand my rule of life, as a *reasonable creature*, and as a *christian*; and that, by it, I form the temper and disposition of my heart, and regulate my whole conduct, and practice; for upon this depends, and with this is necessarily connected, the peace and comfort of my life, in this world; and my eternal happiness, in another. And what is the highest preferment, in the *Church*, when laid in the balance against these? It is lighter than a feather, it is of no weight.

He, that will part with his innocence, that will do violence to the sense and reason of his own mind, and desperately break through all the barriers, which duty and conscience have laid in his way; to come at wealth, grandeur, or power, must be an abandoned wretch;

wretch; void of any regard to the true interest of a rational being; of any view, or prospect, but what is confined within the narrow limits of the present life. He must be a poor, contemptible creature, though you suppose him to dwell, in a spacious palace, with a retinue of servants, of various rank and degree about him attending on his nod, to have a table sumptuously furnished, to ride in a coach and six, and to sit with the Lords and Princes of the earth.—All these are foreign to the man, to his character (*a*).

I shall have reason, the longest day I live, to bless God, that I was committed to your care, when I had lost the best of fathers; that my mind was formed, under your hands. Give me leave to tell you, Sir, that my present purpose, of never complying with the terms of ministerial conformity; and the detestation, and abhorrence, which I feel rising in my breast, at the thought of doing it, I impute in a great

D

mea-

(*a*) Equum empturus solvi jubes stratum: Hominem involutum æstimas? Sen. Epistol. LXXX.

measure, to the prevailing influence of those principles, and sentiments, which you cultivated, and cherished, in my soul. You sowed the good seed, God blessed the springing thereof; and this is some of the good fruit of it. I hope, therefore, you will not think unfavourably of me, nor be displeased with me, for forming my resolutions, on those principles; and acting conformably to them, as (I think) I do, in this affair.

[I had wrote so far, and was going to close my *letter*, which I designed to direct for you at *Bath*; when I received the favour of yours, dated the thirtieth of last month, which gave me greater pleasure, than any letter, that ever came to my hands. Particularly, I rejoice to hear that you are mended in your health. I pray it may be established. May God prolong your valuable life, in mercy to me, and to many others.

The state of mind, which I was in, when I received yours, was (as you will perceive, from what I have wrote above) far from being desirable; but I was greatly
re-

relieved, by the time, I had finished the reading of it. The favourable opinion, which you still entertain, of my integrity, and the kind construction you put, upon my declining to engage in the public service of the *Church*, according to your usual candour and goodness, together with the assurance, you give me, of your favour and kind regard, quite removed that solicitude and anxiety, arising from an apprehension of your displeasure; which had greatly oppressed my mind, for some time past. And now I see no difficulty, no rub, in my way, but what I can easily get over.

It was an untoward accident, that it happened, you should be acquainted with the affair, by my brother, before you had any hint of it, from me. In your letter of the eighteenth of last month you let me know, that you designed to continue at *Bath*, a month, or six weeks, longer. I could not, therefore, imagine, that my brother would have met with you, in his way home. Had I, in the least, apprehended that, either I should not have communicated my mind to him; or, if I had, I

D 2

should

should have engaged him not to inform you of it ; for I designed, as I thought it was fit, you should have had your first information of it, immediately, from myself ; and that you had it not so, I confess, upon the face of the thing, it did not look well. But I am persuaded that, before you have read thus far, you will be satisfied, that it was not owing to any want of respect.

Your authority over me, though not in law, yet in reality, is as great as ever it was ; and I hope, while you and I live, you will still continue to be my guide and instructor.

The kind offer, which you are pleased, Sir, to make, of your attempt to answer *my objections*, I gladly imbrace ; and thankfully acknowledge the favour, you do me, herein. I shall be glad to be satisfied, in my own mind, of the lawfulness of what I do, before I do it, and to see my way plain and clear before me,

To keep one's mind open to conviction,
upon rational evidence ; to be ready to receive

ceive and embrace truth, in general, in the love of it, and to adhere to it, let the consequence be what it will, (and it can never be ill upon the whole) is the part of an honest man; but for a man, absolutely to resolve, that he will never alter his judgment, as to this, or that particular point, that he will maintain, as long as he lives, this or that particular doctrine, or notion, is bigotry, or absurdity; for, if he has but a probable evidence of the truth of the doctrine, this is to resolve that he will maintain it, be it true, or false; for what is only probable, may be either; but if he has a clear and certain evidence of it, then it is to resolve (if such a resolution can be formed) to do what he knows he cannot help doing; and, therefore, has no sense in it.

Before I produce my *objections*, I would beg leave to take notice of a passage or two more, in your *letter*. You say “ upon
“ the whole, I think, that many of the
“ objections, made by these,” the *Dissent-*
ers, “ against conforming to the Church of
“ England, as by law established, may be
“ fairly retorted upon them; and the things
“ objected

“ objected against, justified, upon that prin-
 “ ciple, allowed, and maintained, by them-
 “ selves, *namely*, that there should be some
 “ *Church-Establishment* in every *christian na-*
 “ *tion.*” It is known, indeed, that some
Dissenters have maintained this principle,
 and that the *Presbyterians* did, actually,
 establish their *form of Church-Government*,
 when they had the power in their hands.
 Now I think, what you observe, is just,
 as to those of them, who maintain this prin-
 ciple; but I have some reason to think,
 that there are not so many *Dissenters*, at
 present, as were formerly, in this way
 of thinking. I have had opportunities, since
 I have been in *London*, of conversing with
 some of those, who are called *Presbyteri-*
ans. And I find, that most of those, whom
 I have conversed with, are against all *eccle-*
siastical establishments. I have heard some
 of them declare, that they would as soon
 [conform to an *Episcopal*, as to a *Presbyteri-*
an, national, established Church.

But what signifies it to me, what their
 notion of the matter is? This is of no con-
 sequence, in my case. What I want to
 know

know, is, how I shall be able to defend my complying with the *terms* of *ministerial conformity*, not on the principles of any *Dissenters*; but upon the principles of truth and *duty*; to justify such compliance, not to other men, but to the *reason* of my own mind; and to reconcile it with my duty to God, as a *reasonable creature*; with my fidelity to *Christ*, as a professed *Christian*, as a subject of his kingdom; and with that liberty, wherewith he hath made me free. I want not an *argumentum ad hominem*, but *ad conscientiam*, that will satisfy my own mind, and make me easy in myself.

——— *Quod me mihi reddat amicum*

Quod pure tranquillet (b)

Besides. To endeavour only to answer the Dissenters, and to satisfy them, is, I think, to show them a great deal too much regard. Some of the *fathers of our Church* have, more than once, applied themselves, to some of the leading men, among the *Dissenters*, and have asked them, “ what “ is it that you and your people would have? “ What

(b) Hor. Epist. Lib. I. ep. xviii.

“ What will satisfy you? Will you come to
“ *Church*, if such and such things, which
“ you object against, be altered, and you
“ find fault with, be rectified?” Now, had
I been a *Dissenter*, and had such questions
put to me, I should have answered them,
in some such manner as this. “ We are
“ easy and contented, as we are. We will
“ be quiet, if you will let us be quiet. We
“ do not want to go to *Church*. We have
“ *Meeting-houses* of our own, in which we
“ are tolerated, by the *law of the land*, to
“ worship God, in such a way; as, we
“ think, is most agreeable to the simplicity
“ of the *gospel*, and most conducive to our
“ spiritual edification. As for your *national*
“ *Church*, if there be any thing in the *con-*
“ *stitution* of it, that wants mending, why,
“ *in God's name*, mend it, without regard
“ to us. If any thing be wrong in it, rec-
“ tify it, not to please *us*, but to please
“ God; and for your own edification:
“ Mend it, because it is wrong. That this
“ be done is your concern, not ours. What
“ business have we, who do not belong to
“ your *Church*; who seldom go into your
“ religious assemblies, to direct you, what
“ altera-

“ alterations, or regulations, you should
“ make, in any part of your establishment ?
“ particularly in your form of public wor-
“ ship? It belongs to you, who make use
“ of this form; not to others, who never
“ use it, to make it as perfect and com-
“ pleat, in every respect, as may be.

Another passage, which I would take notice of; and from which, I would take occasion, to give you an account, how I spend my time, which you have a right to know, is that, where you suppose that the objections that I have, against entering into *orders*, were suggested to me by some, whom I have conversed with, here in *London*. I assure you, Sir, these occurred to my mind, two years, at least, before I left the university. I have lived pretty retired, ever since I have been here. The summers, for the most part, I have spent, you know, in the country, and when I am in town, I seldom go into company. My studies, in which I find much more delight, take up the greatest part of my time. I take a ride out, or a walk in the fields almost
E every

26 L E T T E R I.

every day, if the weather permits, sometimes alone sometimes in company, and I go two or three times a week to a neighbouring coffee-house, where I sometimes meet with good conversation. As this letter has filled my paper, already, you may expect another, next post, from

Your most dutiful, and

Most obedient Servant,

H. M.



LETTER



LETTER II.

From the N E P H E W.

Reverend and Honoured Sir,

Now come to the *objections*, which
 I I have, against *ministerial confor-*
mity. They are not few; but I
 shall not trouble you with them all, at pre-
 sent; I shall lay before you only two or
 three, which if you answer to my satisfac-
 tion, I shall have *reason* to hope, that you
 will be able to remove all my other *difficul-*
ties; and then will I gladly take upon me
 the *sacred function*; and, with pleasure,
 discharge, the duties, belonging to it, ac-
 cording to my *father's* intention and yours.

The first thing that I shall take notice of,
 and which I cannot comply with, is the
subscribing to the thirty nine articles; which
 is indispensably insisted on, as one term of

ministerial conformity. You see, Sir, this objection affects what you call *capital*, in the constitution of the Church of England, as by law established, and is essential to it; for that must be allowed to be essential to any Church, without which, there can be no *ministry*, in that Church.

Whether the drawing up of any scheme, or system, of religious doctrine; and then making it the standard of *orthodoxy*; and peremptorily insisting upon it, that every one, who applies to be admitted into *holy orders*, shall, before he be admitted, *subscribe* to it, or make a declaration, that he believes every particular *article*, or doctrine contained in it; or whether the complying with such a demand can be justified upon christian, protestant principles; whether either can be reconciled with our owning and professing *Christ* to be our only Lord and Master; and the *gospel*, the only rule of our faith; even though that system contains nothing but what is agreeable to *scripture*, is what I shall not here consider; only I beg leave to say, that I have never yet seen; and, I believe, never shall see, it done. At present,
I shall

I shall confine myself wholly to the *thirty nine articles*, and the subscribing to them, as a necessary term of ministring, in the office of a *priest*.

What naturally offers itself to be considered, in the first place, and should be here settled, before I proceed any farther is, the nature and meaning of this *subscription*. Now; this I find done, ready to my hand, in such a precise, determinate manner, in the title of the *articles*, and in the *thirty sixth canon*, that one would be apt to think, it was impossible, for any man, to mistake it, who had read these; even though he should be ever so much blinded with prejudice. Nay, if we only consider the nature of the thing, in itself, I think the true meaning of the *subscription* is plain and obvious; supposing a man only to *subscribe* his name to the *articles*, to qualify himself, for officiating in *holy orders*, in the presence of witnesses. This is evidently a signification of his belief of them; that he thinks the doctrine, contained in them, to be true; if it has any meaning at all. And a meaning it certainly has, as much as
any

any verbal proposition, and I believe not one in ten thousand would put any other construction upon it; if he were to give his sense of it, fairly and without prejudice. But, if the meaning of it were ever so ambiguous in itself, yet all ambiguity is removed, by the *title*, and the *canon* abovementioned. I shall here transcribe the *title*, at large, and so much of the *canon*, as relates to this subject. The former runs thus.

“ Articles, whereupon it was agreed, by
 “ the Arch-bishops, and Bishops, of both
 “ provinces, and the whole clergy, in the
 “ convocation, holden at *London*, in the
 “ year of our Lord God one thousand
 “ five hundred sixty and two, according
 “ to the computation of the *Church of Eng-*
 “ *land*, for the avoiding of the diversities
 “ of opinions, and for stablishing con-
 “ sent, touching true religion, put forth
 “ by the *Queen’s* authority.” Here is assigned the reason, or design, of their agreeing upon, and setting forth, the *articles*, to be subscribed, by every one, who would minister, as a priest, in the *Church of England*, “ the avoiding of the diversities of opi-
 “ nions, and stablishing consent, touching true
 religion,

“*religion.*” Now that is a good rule, laid down by *Civilians* (a), to be observed in interpreting any *law*; namely, to put such an interpretation, or construction, upon it; as is consistent with, and answers to, the design of the *law*. And, if we follow this rule, in the case before us, we can put no other construction upon the *subscribing* to these *articles*, than that it is an acknowledgment of the truth of them. For no other can answer the end of *subscribing*, above mentioned.

In the *thirty sixth canon*, it is ordered, that “no person shall be received into the ministry,**** except he shall first *subscribe* to these three *articles* following, in such manner, and sort, as we have here appointed.” The third of these is, that, which relates to our present subject, and

(a) Plurimum quoque prodest, ad verum sensum investigandum, in legibus cum primis, inspicere rationem legis, seu causam, et respectum illum, qui ad legem ferendam latorem moverit; imprimis ubi constat unicam eam legis rationem fuisse. De qua hæc regula est: illa interpretatio legis est sequenda, quæ rationi legis congruit; et contra rejicienda, qua ab eadem discrepat. *Puffend. de Offic. Hom. et Civ. Lib. I. Cap. xvii. Sect. 8.*

and in these words. "That he alloweth
" the *book of articles* of religion agreed
" upon, by the Arch-bishops and Bishops
" of both provinces, and the whole clergy
" **** and that he acknowledgeth all, and
" every, the articles, therein contained,
" being in number *nine and thirty*; be-
" sides the ratification, to be agreeable to
" *the word of God.*" Then follows the
form of the *subscription*. "To these three
" *articles*, whosoever will subscribe, he
" shall, for the avoiding all ambiguities,
" subscribe, in this order, and form of
" words, setting down both his christian
" and surname; viz. *I N. N. do willingly*
" *and ex animo, subscribe to these three*
" *articles abovementioned, and all things,*
" *that are contained in them.*" Here the
person to be ordained, or *received into the*
ministry, expressly declares, in the subscrip-
tion itself, that he *acknowledgeth all, and*
every, the articles to be agreeable to the
word of God. Is it not then, to the last
degree, surprizing, to hear it said, as some
clergymen have said, that they have sub-
scribed to the articles as *articles of peace?*
that is, that they *subscribed* to them, not
as

as what they are, *articles of religion*, or religious doctrine, but as what they are not, *articles of peace*, or, which they might as well say, as *articles of geometry*. Others have said, that they have subscribed to the *articles*, only so far, as they are *agreeable to the word of God*. That is to say, they acknowledged them “to be agreeable to the *word of God*, all, and every one of them, “so far as they are agreeable to the *word of God*.” Egregious trifling! and in what they look upon, as a very solemn affair, or would be thought to do so; and would have others, too, entertain the same notion of it. Or thus. “We acknowledged, *ex animo*, all, and every of the *articles*, to be agreeable to the word of God; “but, as we did not, really, and in our “minds, believe them to be so, we *subscribed* them, with this mental reservation; *so far as they are agreeable to the word of God*.” Others have said, “that “they subscribed to the articles *in their own sense*.” So any *Arian*, or *Socinian*, any *Papist*, or *Deist*, may as well do. But this was not really the case. For, in just and true construction, they subscribed to

F

them,

them, before God and *men*, in the grammatical sense of the words: As much as a witness, in court, takes an oath, not in his own sense, but in the grammatical sense of the words of the oath, and indeed no words can have any other sense. Besides: It was ordered, by royal authority, “that no man, “thereafter, should put his own sense, or “comment, to be the meaning of the *article*, but should take it, in the literal, “grammatical sense.” Others again have said, “that they did not subscribe to them, in “any sense at all; that they considered their “*subscription*, only as a qualification required, by the civil magistrate, and the “law of their country, for their officiating, as *priests*, in the *Church* established “in that country.” If so, then their subscribing to the four and twenty letters, or standing upon their heads, supposing either of these to have been required by law, would have served to avoid diversities of opinions, and stablish consent touching true religion, altogether as well. But neither is this the truth of the case. For whoever, in a *subscription*, acknowledges, that the *articles*, all and every one, of them, are agreeable to

the *word of God*, he must be understood to mean, that they are so, not in the characters, or letters, in which they are wrote, but in the sense of them.

This point then, I think, is sufficiently settled. To me it appears very evident, that he, who subscribes to the thirty nine articles, *in such manner and sort*, as is appointed in the *Church of England*, solemnly declares, before GOD and men, that he really, and in his own mind, thinks them to be *agreeable to the word of God*, and believes them to be true. Therefore, to remove my *difficulty*, and answer my *objection*, it must be made to appear to me, either that every one of the *articles* is, in the sense of it, *agreeable to the word of God*, or else that I may, honestly, and with a good conscience, *subscribe* to them in the manner and form above quoted; though I am fully satisfied (which is really the case) that some of them are *contrary to the word of God*, or *reason*, or both, that some of them contradict others, or are contradictory in themselves; and though some of them are

to

to me unintelligible; either of which, I almost despair of ever being satisfied of.

As to the latter. If I can, honestly, declare, that “I believe all and every one of “the articles to be agreeable to the word “of God;” when I think some of them are contrary, or not agreeable, to it, in order to be admitted into some *ecclesiastical office*, and to be intitled to the profits, or salary, annexed to the discharge of it, in any particular place, or *living*, as it is called; then there is nothing but what I may innocently do; there is no distinction, or difference, between *honest* and *dishonest*; *lawful* and *unlawful*. And this is so plain, that those, who subscribe these *articles*; though, at the same time, they do not believe that they are, all, *agreeable to the word of God*; (which is the case, I may safely say it, of nineteen out of twenty, who do subscribe them) deny that their subscription is, or implies, an acknowledgment, that they are so. And, to justify themselves to the world, and to their own minds, not very inquisitive perhaps into the matter, nor scrupulous about it, they put those strange constructions,

ons, before-mentioned, upon their *subscription*; every one of which is, either false, and contradictory to the very *form* of the *subscription*; or senseless, and so must every other construction of it be, that the wit of man can invent, besides the true one, *namely* that it is such an acknowledgment. But what wretched *dawbing* is this! It is strange, methinks, how they can, at such a rate, make up matters with their own consciences. Were I to subscribe the *thirty nine articles*, while they appear to me, in the light, they do, at present, I should look on myself, as one, who had made *shipwreck of faith, and a good conscience*; and should not be able to vindicate myself, from the guilt of *perjury*. I am sure, I should do that, which could be no more justified, than *perjury*. Suppose one of that sect of *christians* among us, which scruples taking an oath, should appear, in a court of judicature; and, in giving his testimony, declare, or affirm, what he knows to be false, every one would be ready to charge him with *perjury*, without any scruple; as much as if he had *sworn*, upon the *gospels*. But, if a man declares, or affirms, in the *Church*,
what

what he knows to be false; and signs his *name* to that *declaration*, it would be thought, by a great many, very harsh, rude, and uncharitable, in any one, to charge him with *perjury*. But is not this an instance of great *partiality*. The crime, in both cases, seems to me, to be the same. For it is not the nature, of the thing affirmed, but the falsehood of the affirmation, that constitutes the *perjury*. Why then, is the former person condemned, and the latter cleared; at least, not accused? This is plainly,

Iraſci non peccatis, ſed peccantibus.

It has often given me a very disagreeable ſenſation of mind, I know not by what name to call it, to find men of bright parts, great wit and learning, putting their minds upon the ſtretch, and employing all their talents, to puzzle, and perplex, the plainest things in the world; of which any ploughman, or thresher, is as competent a judge as the most learned; and to defend the greatest absurdities, in speculation, and practice; such as these, “that three Gods
“are but one God: And that, in one
“God, there are three Gods: That the
“bread

“ bread and wine, in the Lords supper,
“ are his real body and blood; that one
“ man may lawfully break his faith with
“ another, or take away his life, if that
“ other doth not believe, as he doth; that
“ the *Bishop of Rome* is the vicar of *Christ*,
“ and head of the christian Church, here
“ on earth; that the holy sacrament, insti-
“ tuted by *Christ*, in commemoration of
“ his death, may be lawfully made use of,
“ as a tool, to serve the temporal interests
“ of a particular party of christians; to se-
“ cure the dignity, power and wealth of
“ their *Clergy*; and that a man’s partaking
“ of it may be lawfully made a qualifica-
“ tion, for a civil post, or office;” and, to
mention no more particulars, “ that a man,
“ at least a *Clergyman*, may declare, that
“ to be true, which he knows, at the same
“ time, to be false, and be faultless.” A
greater instance of moral corruption, and
degeneracy, in the human mind; and abuse
of that *reason*, with which God hath indu-
ed man, can hardly be mentioned, than
that such men should advance, or defend,
such monstrous absurdities; unless it be
this, “ that whole nations have been led,
by

“ by degrees, into the belief, or rather the
 “ profession, of them, and inspired with a
 “ furious, blind zeal, in propagating, and
 “ establishing, them.”

It is a question, with me, whether a man doth any service, to the cause of truth, and the interest of religion, by engaging in a formal dispute, and controversy, with men, who maintain such gross absurdities; and setting himself to confute them by a laboured method of reasoning and arguing; for they are not to be convinced in this way. They will dispute eternally, and return cavil, and sophistry, for argument, without end (*b*). But could you but once remove those prejudices, out of their hearts, which impair their understandings, in these particular points, and corrupt their judgments; could you inspire them with a pure, prevailing,

(*b*) Cavillatoribus istis abunde responderimus. Sed non debuit hoc nobis esse propositum, arguta differere, et philosophiam, in has angustias, ex sua majestate, detrahere. Quanto satius est, ire aperta via et recta, quam sibi ipsi flexus disponere, quos cum magna molestia debeas relegere? Neque enim quidquam aliud istæ disputationes sunt, quam inter se captantium lusus. Sen. Epistol. cii.

ing, love of truth; they would immediately thereupon, without any reasoning, see, as clear as the sun, the absurdity of such opinions, and wonder how they could ever entertain them. For what is it, that puts men, upon maintaining and defending such absurdities? Take the true account of this matter from that excellent author *Doctor Clagett*. Nothing is more evident, in the experience of the world, than this, that when men are led aside, by their worldly interests, when their reputations are engaged, and they are made fast to a party, their understandings are so disabled; that, in a short time, they confidently put themselves upon defending things, most unjustifiable; and believing things, that are most incredible and impossible. Sermon. II. in Vol. II.

The only thing then, now left, whereby this *objection* against *clerical conformity*; namely, the *subscribing* to the thirty nine articles, can be satisfactorily answered, is, to make it appear, that every one of them is *agreeable to the word of God*. But, to save you the trouble, of going over them

G

all,

42 L E T T E R II.

all, and attempting to shew this, of every one of them, in particular, I shall take notice of some of them; against which, I have the strongest objection. But this must be deferred to my next letter: which shall follow this, as soon as conveniently may be.

I am,

Reverend and Honoured Sir, &c,



L E T T E R



LETTER III.

From the NEPHEW.

Reverend and Honour'd Sir,

Now proceed to the *articles* themselves.

ARTICLE I.

In the *first article*, it is said, that “there is but one living and true God; **** and, “in the unity of this Godhead, there be “three persons, of one substance, power, “and eternity, the Father, the Son, and “the Holy Ghost.”

I take it for granted, that the word, God, is used precisely, in the same sense, throughout the whole body of these *articles*. And, if so, the first clause in this article, *there is but one living and true God*,

is a direct contradiction to the *second*, and *fifth*, articles. For it is said, in the former, “that the *Son* is very and eternal “*God* ;” and, in the latter, “that the *Holy “Ghost* is very and eternal *God*.” And it is to be supposed, though it be not expressly said so, in any *article*, that the *Father* too is *very and eternal God*, as he is one of the persons said to be in the *Godhead*. Now it is inconsistent with all the notions we have of *reason* and *truth* ; it is impossible in the nature of the thing, for any one to believe, or give his assent to, a contradiction. He may utter, with his mouth, these words, *the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet there is but one God* ; but then, he can have no meaning, no perception, in his mind ; of which these words are expressive. And he may say, that he believes, that *there is but one God, and yet that there are three Gods* ; but then, he says, what is not true ; nor can I see how such a declaration can be made to consist with strict honesty. The *subscribing* of one’s name, to these words may be made a condition of a man’s being admitted into an *ecclesiastical*, or civil office ; and so may his

his jumping over a stick, be; and with as great propriety.

Let us now consider the latter part of this article. "And, in the unity of this God-head, there are three persons." — To say, that *there are three persons, in the God-head*, is an assertion, that hath not the least foundation, in *scripture*. There is not one sentence, not one word in the *christian revelation*, to support it. And to say, "that *there is a trinity of persons* (whatever is meant "by the word *person*) *in unity*;" is as plain a contradiction, as can be expressed in words. — Again. In this *article*, "the "Father, Son and Holy Ghost are said to "be *of one substance, power, and eternity*." That is (as I suppose the compilers meant) "of one numerical individual, not specific, substance." Now, I think, it is impossible to conceive of one individual being or substance, but as one person. From whence, it follows, that the three persons are but one person; another flat contradiction! When men pretend to talk, without Ideas: And to treat of things, of which they are entirely ignorant, it is no wonder that

that they should run into absurdities and contradictions. But how men, who had any reverence of *Deity*, in their minds; any fear of God, before their eyes; could allow themselves, to talk, so wantonly; and determine so presumptuously, concerning the *substance* of the incomprehensible *Jehovah*, is really surprizing.

A R T I C L E II.

In the *next article*, it is asserted that
 “two whole and perfect natures, that is the
 “*Godhead* and *Manhood*, were joined to-
 “gether, in one person, never to be divi-
 “ded; whereof is *one Christ*, very God,
 “and very Man; who truly suffered,
 “was dead, and buried, to reconcile the
 “*Father* to us.”

Now, in the *first*, it being said, that,
 “in the unity of this *Godhead*, there be
 “three *persons*, Father, Son, and Holy
 “*Ghost*,” the plain meaning of this part of
 the *second article*, according to the gram-
 matical construction of the words, is this,
 that this one person, *Christ*, in whom were
 joined

joined the whole and perfect Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the whole and perfect Manhood, the human soul and body, suffered, was dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us; that is, the Father of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, joined together with the whole and perfect Manhood, in one person. And I will be so bold, as to say, that no other different sense can be fairly put upon them. Here then I would ask, “Who, or what, is this “Father of”———? But, to use the words of a heathen divine,

Φέιδομαι τῶν ῥημάτων, καὶ αἰδῶς με τὸ θεῶν ἔχει. (a)

This account of the eternal, unchangeable God, is too shocking to dwell upon. —Was ever any thing more gross asserted, of the deity, by *Hobbes*, *Spinoza*, or *Epicurus*?

ARTICLE III.

In the *third article*, it is said that “*Christ* **** (that person, in whom were
“joined

(*) Maxim. Tyr. Dissert. III.

48 L E T T E R III.

“joined together two whole and perfect natures, that is the Godhead and Manhood) “went down into Hell.” If this article, as *Bishop Burnet* observes, in his exposition, “is capable of three different senses, all “three, both literal and grammatical,” and there is nothing, in the *article* itself, to determine, in which of the three, it is to be understood, then it has no sense at all, and as such I pass it over, and proceed to,

A R T I C L E IV,

The *fourth article*, asserts that “*Christ* “**** is with flesh, bones, and all things “pertaining to the perfection of man’s nature, ascended into heaven.” Not to mention some absurd, ridiculous consequences, which might be deduced from this *article*: For I would not give way to any levity, on a subject, that is serious; this assertion plainly and fully contradicts some passages in the new testament, particularly that of the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 50. *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; neither corruption inherit incorruption.* That, by *flesh* and

and blood, we are to understand the human, animal nature, which is of the earth, earthy, is evident, from the subject, which the apostle, professedly, and at large, treats of, in this chapter; *namely*, the resurrection of the body. Even *bishop Burnet*, in his exposition of this *article*, owns, that "it seems probable, from what *Saint Paul* says, (*that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, which relates to our glorified bodies, when we shall bear the image of the second, and heavenly Adam) that *Christ's body* hath no more the modifications of *flesh and blood*, in it; and that the glory of the celestial body is of another nature, and texture, than that of the terrestrial." Another text of scripture, which this article contradicts, is that, where the same apostle, speaking of *Christ*, says, *who shall change our vile body*, that with which we are now clothed, consisting of flesh, and blood, and bones, that it may be fashioned, like unto his glorious, or glorified, body; or, as it is in the original, *the body of his glory*. Phil. iii. 21.

A R T I C L E VIII.

Nor can I subscribe to that part of the *eighth article*, where it is said, that, “the *athanasian creed* ought thoroughly to be received, and believed, and that it may be proved by certain warrants of *holy scripture*,” for I think this *creed* contradicts *itself*, *scripture*, and *common sense*: —Nor to those horrid clauses, in it, in which all are condemned *everlastingly*, who do not believe this heap of contradictions. —These have been often taken notice and complained of, but hitherto to no purpose.

The Athanasian Creed, &c.

Before I proceed to any other *article*, I beg leave to make a pause, here; to reflect upon that grand corruption of the doctrine of *Christ*; which hath prevailed, for so many ages, and spread itself, so widely, throughout the christian part of the world; which hath been looked upon, as the most sacred, important, *article* of the christian faith; and the belief of it, as necessary to
salva-

salvation ; and the denial of it, as deserving of, and hath accordingly been punished with, the most cruel, painful death. I mean that absurd doctrine, if nonsense and contradiction may be said to be doctrine, "that there are three persons in the God-head ; every one of whom is God, in the same sense, and yet that there is but *one* God." If this be true, then any thing may be true, or false ; or true and false, at the same time ; and there could be no such thing, as knowledge, or reason, in the world.

What barbarous, uncouth terms, as these, *triunity, unitrinity, personality, suppositality, consubstantiality, coessentiality, inexistence, circumincession, ineity, perseity, &c.* and how much *logic, and metaphysics*, are to be met with, in the writings of those, who have laboured to explain, and prove, this doctrine. All which is as foreign to *pure christianity*, and as unlike the plainness and simplicity of that *gospel*, that heavenly doctrine, which *Christ* preached, to the poor ; as any thing can be, to another. It is a sad case, that christians, instead of go-

ing to that pure, clear fountain, *the gospel of Christ*; from thence, to draw the water of life; the truth, that would save them, if they do not hinder its natural tendency; and the influence of it, on their own hearts, should be dabling, and groping, in those deep *metaphysical cisterns*, which are full of thick, miry water. How greatly hath this metaphysical notion, of *trinity in unity*, and *unity in trinity*, hindered the success, and retarded the progress, of the *gospel*, in the world. It hath been an heavy dead weight, upon *christianity*; whereby it has been kept, and, 'till it is removed, will, in all likelihood, be kept, in a low state.

In a conversation, last summer, at your house, Sir, at which were present two of your neighbouring brethren, I remember, you accounted for the introduction of this corruption, at first, into the *christian doctrine*, how it came to pass, by supposing it to be brought in, by the *greek fathers*, who had been instructed in the *platonick philosophy*, and had their heads filled with the airy flights, and whimsical conceits, of that philo-

philosophy; which seems to me to be the most probable account of the matter, from a remarkable passage, which I lately met with, in *Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian*; where, speaking of two *Presbyters*, who were reckoned to be *Arians*, he says, θαυμάσαι ἐν μοι ἔπεισι, πῶς ἔτοι οἱ ἄνδρες τῇ Ἀρειανῶν θρησκείᾳ παρέμειναν, ὧν ὁ μὲν τὸν Πλάτωνα αἰεὶ μετὰ χειρὸς εἶχεν· ὁ δὲ τὸν Ὠριγένην ἀνέπνεεν. “I cannot but admire, how these two men “came to continue in the sect of the *Arians*; as one of them had *Plato* in his “hands, continually: The other was always reading *Origen* (b).” And I am confirmed, in this, more especially, from the learned *Doctor Cudworth’s intellectual system*, that author having given an account of the *platonian trinity*, and compared it with what he calls the *christian trinity*, in several particulars, seems mightily pleased to find them turn out, so much alike; and that there is so great a resemblance between them (c). “We have now,” says he “given a full and true account of the genuine, *platonian trinity*,” and then concludes that

(b) *Socrat. Lib. VII. Cap. vi.*

(c) *Intellect. Syst. Chap. iv.*

that “*platonism* is undoubtedly more agree-
 “able to the truth of *christianity*, than *ari-*
 “*anism*; it being a certain middle thing,
 “between that, and *sabellianism*; which, in
 “general, was the mark, which the *nicene*
 “*council* aimed at,” and he would have
 “the *platonick*” that is the *orthodox*, “*chris-*
 “tians entertain a favourable opinion of
 “the genuine, *heathen platonists*.”

This learned *Doctor* had been much bet-
 ter imployed, had he spent all that time,
 in playing at *pushpin*; which he spent, in
 drawing out that *parallelism*, as he calls it,
 between the *genuine, platonick*, and the *chris-*
tian, trinity. The former imployment would
 have been but *childish*; but, in the latter,
 he was, though not designedly, doing mis-
 chief; doing hurt to the interest of *chrisli-*
anity; as he was endeavouring to establish
 and propagate, the belief of what is one of
 the greatest *corruptions* of the *christian doc-*
trine, as contained in the *new testament*, by
 shewing, that “the best philosophers, a-
 mongst the *Pagans*, were so far from being
 “shy of such an hypothesis, of *trinity in*
 “*unity*; as that they were even fond there-
 “of.”

"of." But, for all, that he hath said, to this purpose, the *trinity* is still the *choak-pear of christianity* (d).

Another observation, I remember, was then made, by one of the two Gentlemen, before mentioned, which, I own, did pretty much surprize me. But the surprize was agreeable, as I was greatly pleased to hear such an honest, ingenuous confession. His observation was, (perhaps you may remember it too) that, "though it belongs, in
"a peculiar manner, to the *clergy*; as a
"part of their office, *to contend earnestly*
"for the *faith*, once delivered to the
"saints, to do what they can, to preserve
"it free from all corruptions and mix-
"tures; and to preach it, in its purity and
"simplicity; yet, they have been the great-
"est corrupters of it, in the world." And, I think, it may, with as great truth, be observed, that they have always shewn the greatest zeal, in defence, and support, of their own inventions; which they have mixed with the pure genuine doctrines of the *gospel*. The former, they have represented, as the
most

(d) Vid. Pref. to Intell. Syst.

most weighty, important doctrines of *christian* belief; and have laid a greater stress upon them, than upon the latter; endeavouring to possess peoples minds, with the greatest veneration for them; wherein they have but too well succeeded, to the great prejudice of *christianity*. In so much, that the far greater part of *christians* are afraid, even to examine, and try them; or to pass any judgment upon them; lest they should profane what is *sacred*, or reject what is really a *doctrine of revelation*. They dare not meddle with them, lest they die (e).

How many instances are there in history, of ecclesiastics, when they were raised to some of the highest stations, in the *Church*; when they were got into power, and have had the civil magistrate on their side, when they could triumph, as *Chillingworth*, that champion for *protestantism* doth in one of his sermons (f), who have looked

(e) Ubi deorum numen prætenditur, subit animum timor, ne fraudibus humanis vindicandis divini juris aliquid immistum violemus. *Liv. Lib. xxxix.*

(f) "The whole doctrine of *christian faith* is restored to
" the

looked down, on the rest of the world, with the utmost contempt, and insulted the *common sense*, and *reason* of mankind, dictating and imposing; so far as their power reached, in a dogmatical and authoritative manner, the greatest absurdities and contradictions, as sacred *articles of religion*. Those men never troubled their heads, how they should be able to defend these, their *dogmata*, or answer gainfayers, with solid argument; how to prove the truth of them, by *reason* or *revelation*, or even to make any sense of them. They seemed to think that any thing of this kind was beneath them; that it was too great a condescension. If any did dare to be so sawcy, and pragmatical, as to oppugn, or question, the truth of them, they did not stand arguing,

I

and

“ the primitive lustre and integrity: Nay more, (which is
“ a greater happiness, than God ever created, to those,
“ his chosen, good servants, which lived in the infancy
“ of the *Church*) the profession of a pure, unspotted religi-
“ on, is so far from being dangerous, or infamous, that
“ we have the *sword* of the civil magistrate, the power
“ and enforcement of the *laws* and *statutes*, to maintain
“ this, our precious faith, without stain and undefiled,
“ against all *heretical* and *schismatical* oppugners thereof;”
[Sermon I.]

and disputing, with them. No, they had a much shorter, easier, and more terrible, way, to go to work with them.

The *Presbyterian* assembly, at *Westminster*, were a great deal too assuming, when they took upon them to dictate to others, what *faith* they should embrace, and what government and discipline they should maintain, in their *Churches*. And, in all likelyhood, they would have made sad work, in the nation, if the *Parliament*, first, and that independent, *Oliver Cromwell*, afterwards, had not curbed them. However; they condescended so far, and shewed so much reverence, to the authority of the *Bible*, and so much respect to their fellow christians, as to produce texts of *scripture*, in proof of every proposition, or article, in their *confession*, *catechism*, and *directory*. How pertinently they applied those texts, I will not say. But the *episcopal synod*, at *London*, did not vouchsafe to offer one proof from *reason*, or *scripture*, of their *thirty nine articles*; but established them, all at once, with that menacing, irrefragable argument, that *lex horrendi carminis*: “who-
“ ever

“ ever shall hereafter affirm, that any of the
 “ *nine and thirty articles* **** are, in any
 “ part, superstitious, or erroneous, or such,
 “ as he may not, with a good conscience,
 “ subscribe unto, let him be excommunica-
 “ ted, *ipso facto*.” Is not this to treat men,
 as if they were incapable of *religion* and
 void of *reason*, than which, what greater in-
 dignity can be offered to any one, and who
 that has the sense of a *man*, or the spirit of
 a *christian*, to assert that liberty, to which
 the *gospel* hath called him, can help resent-
 ing such treatment. I hope, you will in-
 dulse me, in giving you such repeated
 trouble :

And am,

Reverend and Honoured Sir, &c.





LETTER IV.

From the N E P H E W.

ARTICLE IX.

Reverend and Honour'd Sir,

I Proceed now to the next *article*, which is, of *original or birth-sin*. Where we are told, that "original sin" (which all allow, according to the history of Moses, to be Adam's eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, in disobedience to the express prohibition of God) "is the fault, or corruption, of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam."

How *Adam's* eating of the forbidden fruit, should be the sin, or fault, of his posterity; who were not in being, when he

he committed that sin; is impossible to conceive. *Sin* is a personal thing; not transferable, from one to another. The sin, any more than the pain, of one man cannot be the sin of another, by imputation, or any other way, unless this man can become that man, and that man this man. *Sin is the transgression of the law.* And, by this, a man becomes guilty; not by the imputation of the transgression of the law. Besides that; to charge a person with the guilt of any sin, committed, by another; in which he had no hand at all, and to which he was not, in the least, accessary, in any respect, (which was the case of Adam's posterity, with respect to this *original sin*) is plainly a false charge, and argues injustice, or ignorance.

But it may be said, that, by *birth-sin*, or fault, in this article is meant, not guilt, but moral defect, moral infection, or corruption, which word seems to be there used, as synonymous with, or explanatory of, the word fault. Let it then be understood, in this sense, and let such corruption be here supposed; yet is it not inconsistent with any
right

right notion, which we can form of justice, or righteousness, to say, as it is said, in the following part of this *article*, that this corruption, which is not our guilt, but our unhappiness “in every person born into the “world, deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.” I think, the truth is, that *Adam’s* eating of the forbidden fruit, is neither the guilt, nor the corruption of *every one*, or any one, *that naturally is ingendered of his offspring. Man is born, like a wild asse’s colt.* A new-born infant has no more notion of moral good and evil; and therefore no more capable of moral pravity, or corruption, while in that state of infancy, than *a wild asse’s colt.* Moreover; the body is not a subject, capable of moral corruption. This can exist, only in the soul, which is intelligent and conscious. And, therefore, cannot be propagated, from father to son, by generation. What is propagated, (which is only the meer animal nature) may indeed minister occasion to sin; and so may introduce *moral corruption* into the soul, when this hath attained to moral discernment, can distinguish between moral good and evil.

The

The next clause, in this *article*, is, I think, repugnant to the whole tenor of *scripture*. “And this infection of nature doth remain; yea, even in them, that are regenerated, whereby the lust of the flesh is not subject to the law of God.” It is not here said, whether this infection remains in them, who are regenerated, in whole, in its full strength, or in part. However; it remains so far, according to this *article*, that, even in them, it is not subject to the *law of God*. Now I cannot reconcile this with the following texts of *scripture*. (a) *They, that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.* (b) *Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world.* (c) *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him; that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin; for he, that is dead, is freed from sin.* (d) *But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.*

The

(a) Gal. v. 24.

(b) 1 John v. 4.

(c) Rom. vi. 6, 7.

(d) 1 Cor. ix. 27.

64 L E T T E R IV.

The apostle *Paul*, indeed, says, that (e) *the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be.* But, according to the scripture account, they, who are truly regenerated, are reconciled to God and to his law, in the spirit, or temper, of their minds. They have put off the old man, the carnal mind, and have put on the new man; which, after God, is created in righteousness, and true holiness; so that they walk, no more, after the flesh, but after the spirit, and mind the things of the spirit. Whereas he, in whom the lust of the flesh rules, is not himself subject to the law of God, but to the law of the *flesh*; which, surely, cannot be said of one, that is truly regenerated; for no man can be under the government of these two contrary principles, the *flesh* and the *spirit*. No man can serve these two masters.

A R T I C L E XI.

That clause, in the *eleventh article*, “that we are justified by faith only,” seems to me,

(e) Rom. viii, 7.

me, to be an exprefs contradiction to what Saint *James* ſays. (f) “Ye ſee then, how “that, by *works*, a man is juſtified, and “not by *faith* only.” Therefore I cannot aſſent to it.

ARTICLE XIII.

Nor can I aſſent to what is ſaid in the *thirteenth article*, that “works, done before the *grace of Chriſt* **** have the “nature of ſin:” For, ſuppoſe a man, before the *grace of Chriſt*, that is (as I underſtand it) before he is regenerated, by the grace of Chriſt, or, according to the title of the *article*, before he is *juſtified*, ſhould, out of a kind compaſſionate diſpoſition of mind, ſuccour, or relieve, his fellow-creature, in diſtreſs; which, ſurely, is a ſuppoſable caſe; I do not think, that this action, in him, hath, in it, the *nature of ſin*; though, in other reſpects, and upon the whole, his character be bad. And to tell him, that, in him, it hath the nature of ſin, is to tell him that he ought never to do ſuch an action again; which, I think, would

K

be

(f) James ii. 24.

be wrong. Much less can I assent to this doctrine, if the words are to be extended to *beathens*, as well as professed christians; as it is very likely, the compilers meant them, according to that uncharitable notion, that the best actions of the best men, among the *beathens*, were only *splendida peccata*, varnished sins. For, if the doctrine in this extensive sense of the words be true, it would be as impossible for an *beathen*, to do any moral action; but what had, in it, the *nature of sin*, as it was for him to believe in *Christ*, of whom he had never heard; *that is*, absolutely impossible. Nay, if this doctrine be true, he could not be properly said to be a moral agent, or to be accountable for any of his actions. That is certainly a beautiful lovely character, which our Saviour describes, in the person of a *samaritan* (g). It approves itself to every man's moral sense, and is recommended by Christ to the imitation of all men, in those words of his, *go thou, and do likewise*. What! Go thou, and do that, which hath in it the nature of sin! so is that of Cornelius the Roman centurion.

He

(g) Luke x.

He is said (b) to be a devout man; and one that feared God, with all his house; which gave much alms to the people; and prayed to God alway. Now, this was his character, as the sacred historian informs us, before he had ever heard the gospel preached; while he was a stranger to the grace of Christ; and yet it is said, his prayers and his alms were come up, for a memorial, before God. And they were so pleasing and acceptable, in the sight of God, that he sent an angel, a messenger from heaven, to direct him, whither, and to whom, he should go, to be instructed in the knowledge of Christ. How, then, can it be thought, that these prayers, and alms, of his, which were approved of that God, who is of purer eyes, than to behold evil, had, in them, the nature of sin.

Moreover, according to this article, no man before the grace of God, can do any thing to procure that grace, or make himself meet for it, unless he can procure it by sinning against God. — So that all application, all prayer, to the God of all

K 2

grace,

(b) Acts x.

grace, by men, in this state, that is, *before the grace of God*, is plainly discouraged by this *article*. According to it, all such application would be, not only altogether unsuccessful, but likewise *sinful*, in them.

A R T I C L E XVII.

The next *article*, that I shall take notice of, is, the *seventeenth*, the title of which is “of predestination and election.” The word *predestination* is most commonly used, (i) by *systematical divines*, in such a general sense, as to extend to the whole human race, and to include under it *election* and *reprobation*. But in the sense, in which it is here used, it relates only to those, who, according to this *article*, are ordained to eternal life; and signifies much the same as *election*. For, in the *article*, it is called *predestination to life*, and is explained, or defined,

(i) Prædestinationem, quâ Deus alios in spem vitæ adoptat, alios adjudicat eternæ morti, nemo — Calvin. institut. Lib. III. Cap. xxi. Sect. 5.

Intelligimus nos vocem (*prædestinationem*, scil.) pariter de consilio electionis, et reprobationis. Marck. Medull. Theol. Cap. vii. Sect. 2.

defined, thus: "The everlasting purpose
" of GOD, whereby, before the foundati-
" ons of the world were laid, he hath con-
" stantly decreed, by his counsel secret to
" us, to deliver from curse and damnation,
" those, whom he hath chosen in *Christ*,
" out of mankind, and to bring them, by
" *Christ*, to everlasting salvation, as vessels
" made to honour."

Here *Adam* and all his posterity, are considered as *under curse and damnation*, when GOD made this decree; and therefore as guilty, in his sight, as having transgressed his law; for nothing but guilt can subject a moral agent to curse and damnation. Now, it is certain that a great part of mankind die in their infancy and childhood, before they are capable of having any idea of a law, or moral obligation; and before they are capable of sinning, of being guilty of the actual transgression of any divine law: Therefore, if every individual of the human race was considered of GOD, as *under curse and damnation*, when he made this decree, it must be on account, not of *actual*, but *original sin*, or the *sin of Adam*, according to the
the

the *ninth article*. For no man could be guilty of *actual* sin, or in his own person transgress the law of GOD, before he had a being, or before he was capable of sinning. If therefore all men were under guilt and damnation, on account of *Adam's* sin, they must be so, by GOD's imputing that sin unto them, supposing this for the present, that a man could be really guilty of sin, and liable to punishment, meerly by having it imputed to, or charged upon him.

Now what a shocking representation have we here, set before us, of the divine being! GOD, beholding the whole human race, lying in guilt, and under eternal curse and damnation; all in the same miserable helpless, compassionate state; into which they were brought, by a meer arbitrary, sovereign act of his will, decreed to deliver some, a certain, determinate number, of them, from this state, and to bring them by *Christ*, unto everlasting salvation; — having no mercy, or compassion, on the rest; but leaving them to perish eternally, without remedy, without any possibility of
being

being delivered from that curse and damnation, to which he had subjected them.

Bishop Burnet, on this article, observes, "that it is very probable, that those, who "pen'd it, meant that the decree was absolute. But, since they have not said it, "the *remonstrants* may subscribe the *article*, without renouncing their opinion, as "to this matter." But it is plainly laid down here as absolute. For, in this definition, there is no condition, at all, expressed, or implied. It is said that, God *hath constantly decreed to deliver from curse and damnation*, not all those, who believe in *Christ*, and obey his gospel; but those, whom he hath chosen, in *Christ*, out of mankind. — Besides one cannot make any sense of the following part of the *article*, without supposing the decree to be absolute, where it is said that, "they, "which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called, according to "God's purpose, **** and, at length, attain to everlasting felicity:" For, if the decree were not *absolute*, but *conditional*; all men would be endued with so excellent a bene-

a benefit of God; none, considered as sinners, could be said to be chosen, or decreed to be everlastingly happy, more than others. But, if God had decreed to bring certain particular persons, a certain, determinate number of men, to everlasting salvation, it would be impossible for them, to fail of it. And such a decree would be evidently inconsistent with conditions. It would be, strictly speaking, *absolute*.

The *Bishop*, farther observes, upon this *article*, that “ it does not make any mention of *reprobation*; no, not in a hint. No definition is made, concerning it.” It is true, the word, *reprobation*, is not made use of, in this *article*. But, I think, there is here a broad hint, of what is meant, by it. And, if it be not defined, it is included in, or necessarily follows from, the definition, which we have here, of *predestination to life*. For, if God decreed to deliver, only some, *from curse and damnation*, even those, *whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind*; then the rest are left, under *curse and damnation*. They are left to perish for-ever, without any help, or remedy.

medy. They are past by, they are rejected, that is *reprobated*. *Reprobation* is a necessary consequence of *absolute election*, or *predestination to life*, as *Calvin* rightly observes (*k*). It appears then that *absolute election* is maintained in this *article*; that this is the doctrine, contained in it: Which is directly contrary to all the notions, that we have, of the moral perfections of God, from *reason*, or the light of nature; to the whole course and tenour of the *holy scriptures*; and to some of the *articles* themselves; and is subversive of all *rational religion*.

To represent God, as having created rational beings, capable of happiness and misery; and immediately, upon their coming into being, subjecting them to guilt, to curse, and *damnation*, by 'an arbitrary act of his will; and then leaving them, in this miserable condition, not having any mercy,

L

or

(*k*) Multi, ac si invidiam a Deo repellere vellent, electionem ita fatentur, ut negent quemquam reprobari; sed inscitè nimis, et pueriliter: Quando ipsa electio, nisi *reprobationi* opposita, non staret. *** Quos ergo Deus præterit, *reprobat*. Calvin. Instit. Lib. III. Cap. xxiii. Sect. 1.

or compassion, on the works of his hands; nay inflicting on them, everlasting punishment; for what was absolutely, and ever, out of their power to avoid; is to represent him as,——as what he is not. Should any earthly parent deal, by his offspring, in any such manner, he would be abhorred, and detested, by all men: He would be looked upon, as unworthy to live, on the face of the earth. Those, who never enjoyed a *revelation*, who never had those discoveries of the *grace* and *mercy* of God, which we have had, in the *gospel* of *Christ*, generally conceived of the supreme being as the *best* and *greatest*. These were the appellations, which they gave him.——How inexcusable, then, must it be, in any christians, and dishonourable to God, to represent him as if the former of these did not belong to his nature. That saying of the heathen poet,

(l) *Charior est illis homo, quam sibi,*

Or that of another,

(m) *Mite et cognatum est homini Deus,*

conveys

(l) Juv. Sat. x.

(m) Sil. Ital. Lib. IV.

conveys to our minds, a much more just, as well as amiable conception of *Deity*, than what is suggested, in this *article*. Goodness, benevolence, and mercy, or compassion toward the miserable, and distressed, are things of universally good estimation. They are necessarily approved of, by the mind, or understanding, of every intelligent being. And it is demonstrable, from *reason*, that the one, only, eternal, necessary, self-existent, intelligent, *being* is good and benevolent: And such, he manifests himself to be, in his government of this world, and his providence towards mankind. *His tender mercies are over all his works*. He taketh care of, and provideth for, the children of men, as a tender parent. He is constantly showering down his blessings on our heads. *The earth is full of his goodness. He sendeth us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and filleth our hearts with food and gladness*. This we all daily, hourly, experience; of this we are all witnesses. Yea; he is kind, even to the unthankful, and to the evil. He bears long with wicked and ungodly men. He lengthens out their days, and spares them,

them, from time to time. For what reason? Only that they may contract the more guilt, in this world, and incur a greater punishment in another? No! I can never entertain a thought so unworthy of God; but that they may repent of their sins, and escape the punishment of them.

As the doctrine, contained in this *article*, is contrary to what *reason* and *experience* teach us, of God; so it is, to the whole tenour of the *sacred scriptures*. Herein we are assured, that God *hath no pleasure, in the death of the wicked; that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*. Therefore he sent his son, to be the *Saviour of mankind*, to be a *propitiation* for the *sins* of the *whole world*. For God *is no respecter of persons*. *Christ tasted death for every man*. The precepts and exhortations, the declarations and promises, of the gospel, are general. They relate, or belong, not to a certain number, selected out of mankind; but to all men, alike. Mercy and forgiveness is preached, through Christ, to all, that repent. And he invites all, that labour, and
are

are heavy laden, to *come unto him*, that they may find *rest* to their souls; and promises, that he will, in no wise, cast out any one, that cometh to him. He assures us, that our heavenly father will give his holy spirit to them who ask him, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.

The compilers of the *articles* seem to have been aware, that these, and such like, passages of *scripture* might be objected, against the doctrine, here laid down by them; when they added the two following admonitions, with which this *article* is concluded. "Furthermore, we must receive "God's promises, in suchwise, as they be "generally set forth, unto us, in *holy scrip-* "ture: And in our doings, that will of "God is to be followed, which we have "expressly declared unto us, in the word "of God." Generally, in the former of these sentences, is not, I suppose, synonymous with the word *commonly*, *usually*, or *for the most-part*; but the meaning, as I take it, of these admonitions, as connected with the former part of the *article*, is this. Though God hath decreed to save, and consequent-

ly

ly to bestow the blessings, contained in the promises of *holy scripture*, on them, only, whom he hath chosen in *Christ*, out of mankind; and though we are persuaded of this, from *the word of God*; “yet the
 “promises are *general*; and *we are to re-*
 “*ceive them, as they are set forth*, or made,
 “to all, in general, in *holy scripture*. And,
 “though God before the foundations of the
 “world were laid, purposed, or willed, to
 “save, only those, whom he had *chosen in*
 “*Christ*, out of mankind; as we learn,
 “from *the word of God*; yet it is said,
 “expressly, in the same *word of God*,
 “that *he will have all men to be saved*;
 “that *he is not willing that any should pe-*
 “*risk, but that all should come, to repen-*
 “*tance*; and so obtain salvation, through
 “*Christ*; and this latter is the will of God,
 “which we are to follow, in our doings.”

—— But alas! God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent, or alter his mind, or that he should be inconsistent with, or contradict, himself; nor is it possible for men to believe contradictions. And, therefore, God will
 never

never require it, of us; though some *men* may require it.

I now proceed to prove the next part of my assertion; *namely*, that the doctrine, contained in this *article*, contradicts some others of the *articles*.—— If God purposed to bring, only some, out of mankind, by *Christ*, to everlasting salvation; then this plainly follows, that *Christ* is the redeemer, or saviour, only of those, who were chosen out of mankind. Or rather, this is the same, only in words, somewhat different; which directly contradicts the *twenty eighth article*, where it is said, that “the sacrament of the *Lord's supper* is a sacrament of our redemption, by *Christ's death* ;” for the meaning, here, cannot be, the redemption of us the *elect*, but of us all: And the *twenty fifth*, where we are told, that “the sacraments are effectual signs of grace, and good will towards us,” that is, *us all*: And the *second article*, where *Christ* is said to be, “a sacrifice, not only for *original*, but also for all *actual* sins of men;” and, to mention no more, the *thirty first*; where the offering of *Christ* is said,

said, to be “that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the *sins* of the *whole world*, both *original* and *actual*.”

It now remains to shew that this doctrine is subversive of all true, real *religion*; and takes away the force of every motive and argument, that can be made use of, to persuade men to lead good and virtuous lives. According to the account, here given us, of the procedure and dealing of God, with *mankind*, there appears nothing of mercy, or compassion, in it; not even towards the *elect* themselves. God having chosen *them*, only to shew forth the glory of his sovereignty, of his absolute dominion over the works of his hands, not out of kindness, or mercy, to them. For had it been out of *mercy*, his mercy would have taken in the whole human race; as they were all equally objects of mercy; all in the same miserable, helpless state; unless we suppose him to act, without having any end, in his view; or without any reason of acting; which is highly unworthy of God. Now, if we do not include goodness, in our idea
of

of GOD; but consider him, only as a being of irresistible power, and uncontrollable sovereignty, we must be held, for-ever, under a spirit of bondage to fear. We must have our minds filled with dread and horror, whenever we think of such a being, as the supreme governour of the universe; but could never feel, in our minds, any emotions of love, or gratitude, towards him. And I cannot see, how any man can have any real *religion* in him, (unless by religion we mean horror) whose heart is void of these affections towards the author of his being. He may be superstitious enough, he may have that devoutness, which proceeds from a slavish fear (*n*); and may think to sooth, or flatter, the object of his fear; but cannot be said to be truly *religious*. And that this doctrine tends to weaken, and destroy, the force of all those arguments, which can be made use of, to persuade men, to mind their souls, and a future state; to live holy and virtuous lives; and to make their eternal salvation, their

M

princi-

(*n*) ὁ μὲν εὐσεβὴς, φίλος θεῶν, ὁ δὲ λεισιδαιμων, κόλαξ θεῶν.
Maxim. Tyr. Dissert. IV.

principal concern, is evident. For, suppose one, who maintains this doctrine, should address himself to an irreligious, wicked man, who knows what his opinion is, and should use all the arguments, that he can think of, to this purpose; — might not this other set them all aside, and wholly evade the force of them, by some such answer as this? “According to this doctrine
 “of your’s, my everlasting state is unalter-
 “ably fixed, by the decree of God. What
 “sense is there then, in your persuading
 “me to take care of my soul, and secure
 “my everlasting happiness? Can I reverse,
 “or make void, the *decree of heaven*? Can
 “I resist *almighty power*?”

Nay, in this very *article*, men are cautioned against thinking, at least against thinking, too often, on their future state. For which caution, I think, there is but little occasion. — This seems to me, to be the obvious meaning of that strange passage in it, if it has any meaning at all.
 “For curious and carnal persons, lacking
 “the spirit of *Christ*, to have continually
 “before their eyes, the sentence of God’s
predesti-

“predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation;” for as every man's state of happiness or misery is from eternity unalterably fixed by, and absolutely depends upon, this decree of GOD, it is not conceivable, how a man, who is thoroughly persuaded of the truth of the doctrine, here taught, should think seriously, of another world; or be solicitous about his future state; without having, *before his eyes, this sentence of GOD's predestination.*

Another thing, which it may be proper, here, to take notice of, is, that, according to the system of doctrine contained in these articles, this is the character and state of all men, the *elect* as well as *others*; — they are all *carnal persons, and lack the spirit of Christ*; nay the best actions of their lives have in them the nature of *sin, before justification*; so that for the *elect* [before they are justified] to have, *before their eyes, the sentence of GOD's predestination, the very doctrine, in the former part of this article,*

is a most dangerous downfall; and, if so, this is what they, as well as others, should carefully avoid. — But, how is it, that the devil doth hereby throw them into desperation? Is it not, by putting this notion into their heads, or suggesting it to their thoughts? Which it is not likely he would do, if this doctrine had not, in itself, a tendency, to produce this effect? How then, can they get clear of this charge, which is here laid upon the devil, — who, teach this doctrine, and publish it to the world? Are they not herein fellow-workers with him? Is it not unaccountable, that any should lay that down, as an article of faith; should teach that, for christian doctrine; whereby they own, themselves, men have been thrust into desperation, or into wretchlessness of most unclean living, and which the devil makes use of, to compass the destruction of men's souls?

I shall dismiss this article with observing, that though it be drawn up, with a great deal of reserve, and the authors of it are not so bold, and full, upon the subject, as Calvin, in his *institutions*, or the *assembly of di-*

of divines, at Westminster, in their confession of faith; — yet the eternal state of every man, that is born into the world, is as absolutely and unalterably fixed, in this *article*; especially if it be considered, as it ought to be, in connexion with the other *articles*; particularly the *tenth*, *thirteenth*, and *eighteenth*, as in either of those. And, if it really be so, all the rest, relating to the subject, is but of little moment. That they, who drew up the *article*, understood this decree of *predestination*, to be *absolute*, may, I think, be fairly inferred, from their apprehending this consequence, or effect, of men's having, before their eyes, this sentence, their *being thrust into desperation*. For no such consequence could be apprehended, from men's *having before their eyes a conditional decree*.

A R T I C L E XVIII.

In the next *article*, the *clerical*, cursing style is really shocking. “ They, also, are
 “ to be accursed, that presume to say, tha
 “ every man shall be saved, by the law, or
 “ sect, which he professeth; so that he be
 “ di-

“diligent to frame his life, according to that
 “law, and the light of nature.” — And
 so is the consequence, fairly deducible from
 what is here asserted. For does not Saint
Peter presume to say this (o)? *Of a truth I*
perceive, that GOD is no respecter of persons.
But, in every nation, he that feareth him,
and worketh righteousness, is accepted with
him. — Bishop *Burnet*’s exposition of this
article, is very wrong; quite different from
 the plain, obvious sense of it. The design, or
 meaning of the *article*, according to him, is
 this “that it is not free to men to chuse, at
 “pleasure, what *religion* they will, as if
 “that were left to them; or that all religi-
 “ons were alike.”

I hope your patience will hold out. —
 I must proceed very slowly. — My con-
 science is concerned. — But whatever
 conclusion, I come to, at last,

I am, and shall be,

Reverend and Honoured Sir, &c.

(o) Acts x. 34, 35.



LETTER V.

From the N E P H E W.

Reverend and Honoured Sir,

Am going on, in my observati-
 I ons on the thirty nine articles.

A R T I C L E XIX.

The nineteenth article is, of the visible Church of Christ, which is there defined to be, “a congregation of faithful men, “in the which, the pure word of God is “preached, and the sacraments be duly ad- “ministered, according to *Christ’s* ordi- “nance, in all those things, that are requi- “site to the same.”

This, excepting that it seems to exclude those of our fellow christians, who go under the denomination of *Quakers*, and to imply

imply that a congregation of such, met together, to worship God, is not a *christian Church*, or any part of the *Church of Christ*, nor indeed any congregation of *protestant Dissenters, in England*, of what denomination soever they be; if that doctrine be true, which hath been asserted, and warmly maintained, by many of the *episcopal clergy*. “That *episcopal* ordination is
 “ necessary, to the due administration of
 “ the sacraments, according to Christ’s or-
 “ dinance, or is one of the things, that,
 “ of necessity, are requisite to the same,
 “ and which seems to be the established
 “ doctrine of the national *Church, in En-
 “ gland*, from its insisting upon the ordina-
 “ tion of those, who have been already or-
 “ dained by *Presbyters*, before they are ad-
 “ mitted to minister in *that Church* :” —

This, I say, may be a good definition of a particular, *christian Church*, met together, in one place, for religious worship. — Such, I suppose, was the *Church*, in *Nymphas’* house, and in *Philemon’s* house. Such were the Churches of *Asia*. And there are, thousands of such Churches, or congregations, in *Great Britain*. — But

THE

THE Church, or THE Church of Christ, is but one, one body under one head, of which there never was, a congregation, since Christ's ascension, unless it was at *Jerusalem*; — nor ever will be, 'till the judgment of the great day. — Thus it is spoken of, in the new testament (a). *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church, and he is the Saviour of the body: Therefore, as the Church is subject to Christ, so — I speak concerning Christ, and the Church. —* And in many other places.

ARTICLE XX.

The next article is, *of the power of the Church*. One can hardly conceive, what a charming sound, these words *the power, or authority, of the church*, have, in the ears of some of the *clergy*. It inspires them with lofty thoughts, and gives them a stately air. Nay some, while they have been writing on this subject, *the power of the Church*, seem to have had their heads grown giddy, and their senses not a little affected,

N

with

(a) Eph. v. 23, 24, 32.

with the thoughts of it, for the time. —
 Of this, I shall produce only two instances,
 and those, noted in the *Church*, authors of
 name, and reputation, to this day. The
 first, I shall name, is Mr. *Hooker* (b). “What
 “Angel” says he, “in heaven, could have
 “said to man, as our Lord did unto *Peter*,
 “feed my sheep, preach, baptize, do this
 “in remembrance of me; whose sins ye
 “retain, they are retained; and their of-
 “fences, in heaven, pardoned, whose
 “faults you shall, on earth, forgive? What
 “think we? Are these terrestrial sounds?
 “Or else, are they voices uttered out of the
 “clouds, above? The *power* of the *mini-*
 “*stry* of God translateth, out of darkness,
 “into glory. It raiseth men, from the *earth*,
 “and bringeth God, himself, down from
 “heaven, by blessing visible elements, it
 “maketh them invisible grace. It giveth,
 “daily, the *Holy Ghost*. It hath to dispose
 “of that *flesh*; which was given, for the
 “life of the world; and that *blood*, which
 “was poured out, to redeem souls. When
 “it poureth malediction, on the heads of
 “the wicked, they perish. When it re-
 “voketh

(b) Ecclesiast. Polity, p. 410. Ed. 1617.

“voketh the same, they revive.” Doth not this look like raving? Could a man, out of his senses, talk greater nonsense?

The other instance, is *Doctor Claget*, who, generally, and upon most other subjects, on which he wrote, appears to have had a very just, correct way of thinking: And to have been a strong, clear reasoner; and yet, how weakly doth this author talk, in (c) one of his *sermons*, on this subject, the *authority of the Church*; where he gives us an instance, in himself (which one can hardly help pitying) of the truth of that observation of his, above quoted (d). “Where-
“as,” says he, “the *Church of England*
“does not pretend to be an infallible guide,
“or judge; and yet requires the people, to
“believe as she believes, to profess what
“she professeth, and to do what she enjoyn-
“eth;” (here is no limitation) “it is very
“fit that her ministers should, sometimes,
“make it plain, that she requires this; be-
“cause she has reason so to do, and is not
“in these points deceived; though she does

N 2

“not

(c) Vol. I. Serm. i. Ed. 1694.

(d) See page 41.

“not pretend that she cannot err in any.”

—— Could any man talk more inconsistently than the *Doctor* here doth? And besides, what is here meant, by the *Church of England*? Who, in the world, is this *She*, that, according to this way of speaking, is somebody, distinct from the *ministers* and *people*, or *idiot*, as the *ecclesiastical politician*, above quoted, tells us, (e) Saint Paul nameth the order of the *laity*; but where, I cannot find, in my new testament. Heb. ii. 17. is set down, in the margin; but there is no such word, there.

But to come now to the *article*. —— I suppose, the word, *Church*, in this, and the former *article*, is used, exactly in the same sense; as one should think it ought to be. I would, therefore, here put the definition, in the room of it: To which I think no reasonable objection can be made, and then the first clause of this *article* will run thus. *A congregation of faithful men, and so on*, “hath power to decree rites, or “ceremonies, and authority, in matters of “faith.”

Before

(e) Ecclesiast. Pol. p. 411.

Before I come to the main objections, which I have, to this article, I would here observe, that, in order to submit, and yield obedience, to any authority, it is proper, yea it is necessary to know, who is, or are, invested with that authority. Therefore, I think it not impertinent here to ask, notwithstanding this definition, “What Church, “what congregation, is this, to whom this “power and authority belong? Where is “it? Who are the members of it? In what “part of the world do they live? How far, “and over whom, doth this authority extend?” To which questions any one, who will make the trial, will find it, I believe, a difficult matter, to give a satisfactory answer, satisfactory to any reasonable man; and consistent, likewise, with this definition. — I do not think, that there are any, on earth, who have such power, and authority, lodged in them.

There never was a word used, in a more vague, shifting, indeterminate sense, than this word *Church* hath been by some writers; And that, evidently, with a design,
and

and to serve a turn. One may easily perceive how cautiously, and industriously, they have guarded against a clear, and particular, explanation of the meaning of it, throughout the whole of their writings, even when the *Church* hath been, professedly, the subject of them. Who can tell, for instance, what is meant by this word, in that most unnatural and monstrous, most senseless, and (*f*) *bowellefs*, production, that ever the brain of man was delivered of, the *Alliance between Church and State*? — But whatever is meant, by the *Church* in *this article*; or whoever they are, that constitute it, I cannot assent to it, for two reasons, *first*, because what it asserts is incompatible with the authority of *Christ*; and *secondly*, because the latter part of it contradicts the former.

To say, “that the *Church* hath power to “decree rites or ceremonies,” is to make the *body* the *head*; for such a power can belong only to the *head*, which is *Christ*. For to decree rites, or ceremonies, and to impose the observation of them, in the christian

(*f*) See Canons of Criticism, Canon VI. Examp. viii.

stian worship of God, is, to make *laws* and *ordinances*, in the *Church of Christ*. And whoever do exercise, or claim, such authority, over their fellow christians, they are so far *anti-christian*. They are not subject to *Christ*: As the apostle says the *Church* is; but inroach upon his province; and usurp that authority, which belongs to him only. *The Church of Christ* is the *kingdom of Christ*. And it is an absolute kingdom. He alone is head, or king, of the *Church*. He is the sole legislator in it.

To him, therefore, the *anointed of God*; to him, who is exalted, *far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come*, be glory and dominion ascribed, *in the Church, throughout all ages, world without end*. — And let not poor, weak, sinful mortals presume, in their own vain imaginations, to place themselves, with him, upon his throne; and to issue out their decrees and ordinances, to appoint rites and ceremonies, in his kingdom; and to enforce them, upon their fellow christians, their
fellow

fellow subjects. Who dare ——? Alas! Some have dared, and still dare, thus to incroach, on the prerogative of this *King of glory*, which is incommunicable; and in which none on earth can share with him. *There is but one Lord.*

Is it to be imagined, that *Christ*, who came into this world, to set up, and establish, his spiritual kingdom, here on earth, should leave it to weak, fallible men, to draw out the scheme, or settle the form of it? Or to vary, and alter it, according to their own humours and fancies, in all succeeding ages, to the end of the world? No! The laws and ordinances of his kingdom are left upon record, in the *new testament*. There they are laid down, before us, with the greatest perspicuity and simplicity; and by these, and these only, every christian should be directed, and governed, in things pertaining to the *kingdom of Christ*, and the salvation of his own soul. And whoever is so, throughout the whole course of his life, he is safe, he is in the right way to heaven, and shall, when he hath finished his warfare here, be admitted into *the general*

neral assembly, and Church of the first born inrolled there; by whatever sect, or party, he may now be pronounced an *Heretic*, or a *Schismatic*; or by whatever Church, here, on earth, he may be *excommunicated*.

Christ instituted two rites, in his Church. And who hath power to institute a third? Let them, who lay claim to such a power, produce their commission. Let them make good their claim, and prove it; not from one, or two, texts of *scriptures* of doubtful interpretation; or misapplied; but from such, as are clear, express, and full to the purpose. For this, in the consequences of it, is a matter of very great importance to the *christian Church*. If such a power be allowed, where shall we fix the bounds of it? To what number of *rites, and ceremonies*, shall it be limited? Or is it to be boundless? What a multitude of ceremonies, hath the *Church of Rome* introduced, into the worship of God! And the use and observation of them all, is what they can justify, upon this principle, that *the Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies*.

And, as to matters of *faith*, if any *authority* be left to the *Church*, in these, it must be, either to add to the *christian doctrine*, and to make more *articles of faith*, than are contained in the *gospel*; or to interpret this *rule of faith*, and settle the sense of it. If the former, then these additional *articles* are necessary to be *believed*, necessary to *salvation*; or they are not. To say, that they are; is really to contradict *scripture*; and to make the *christian revelation*, a very defective, and altogether insufficient, *rule of faith*. If they are not; what good purpose doth this authority serve? What valuable end doth it answer? If the latter be the meaning of the *article*, that the *Church* hath *authority* to interpret the *rule of faith*, and to enforce it's interpretation, on those who are subject to it's *authority*; to make this good, it must be proved, either that the *Church* is *infallible*; or else that, if it puts a wrong interpretation on *scripture*, it hath still *authority* to enforce it. Either of which, what *protestant* will undertake to maintain?

To

To say "that the *Church* hath authority "to put a right, or true, interpretation on "*scripture*; and to inforce it," is saying just nothing; or nothing to the purpose. For who shall judge, whether the interpretation be right? Whether it gives the true sense of *scripture*, or not? — If the *Church* is to judge of this; then here is established, at once, an *implicite faith* in the *Church*; an essential principle of popery: The very foundation, on which the *Church of Rome* was raised: And on which it still rests. — If those, over whom the *Church* claims this *authority*, are to judge, in the case; then this *authority* comes to nothing. And indeed, the latter part of this *article* quite destroys that *authority*, which is given to the *Church*, in the former part of it. And, therefore, as was said before, contradicts itself. Let any one tell me, if he can, what *power*, the *Church* hath, to decree rites, or ceremonies; or what *authority*, in matters of *faith*; if it be not lawful for the *Church*, as it is said, in the latter part, to ordain any thing, that is contrary to GOD's word written; neither so to expound one place of *scripture*,

O 2

ture,

ture, that it be repugnant to another. And that, as it ought not to decree any thing, that is against holy writ, so besides the same ought it not to inforce any thing, to be believed, for necessity of salvation.

How weak, and groundless, this claim of the *Church* is, will farther appear; if we consider, that the *apostles*, themselves, though they were *indued with power from on high*, and were, in an extraordinary manner, inspired, and taught, by the *holy spirit*, did not claim, or exercise, such a power, or authority, as is here ascribed to the *Church*. They decreed no *rites*, nor *ceremonies*, to be used, in the *christian* worship; but what *Christ* had instituted, before he ascended to the father. Nor did they inforce any doctrines, by dint of meer authority. They required not an *implicite faith*, or to be believed on their bare word, by those, to whom they preached the *gospel*; but *reasoned* with them. They produced passages of *scripture*, and used arguments to prove their doctrine, to convince men of the truth of it, and to persuade them to believe and embrace it. When *Paul* was at *Thessalonica*,
where

where was a synagogue of the Jews, it is said (g) that "he, as his manner was, went
 "in unto them, and three sabbath-days
 "reasoned with them, out of the *scriptures*,
 "opening, and alledging, that *Christ* must
 "needs have suffered, and risen again from
 "the dead. So at *Corinth* (h); he reason-
 "ed, in the synagogue, every sabbath, and
 "persuaded the Jews, and the Greeks." And in his second epistle to these *Corinthi-
 ans*, after they were converted, and had
 professed christianity, he renounces and dis-
 claims all authority over their faith (i).
 "Not, for that we have *dominion* over your
 "*faith*; but are helpers of your joy." And
 the apostle, *Peter*, exhorts the elders, to
 (k) "feed the flock of God, taking the
 "oversight thereof, not by constraint, but
 "willingly; ———neither as being *Lords over*
 "God's *clergy*, or heritage." *Grotius*, on
 that text, in 2 Cor. i. 24. hath these words.
Nil volumus a vobis credi, nisi quæ Christus
præcepit. Si quid pro nostro lubitu impone-
remus,

(g) Acts xvii. 2, 3.

(h) Acts xviii. 4.

(i) 2 Cor. i. 24.

(k) 1 Pet. v. 1, 2, 3.

remus, hoc esset dominatum exercere in fidem, ut hic: In populum peculiarem Deo, ut 1 Pet. v. 3.

This notion of the *power*, and *authority* of the *Church* must, wherever it is believed and maintained, necessarily, and immediately, affect human society, civil and religious; to the great prejudice and detriment of both. And, accordingly, we find, in history, with what dreadful consequences it hath been attended, where it hath prevailed, and been established. By this *antichristian* power of the *Church* to *decree* rites or ceremonies; and this *authority* in matters of faith; kingdoms have been enslaved, and spiritual tyranny hath been established, throughout *Christendom*. And in the defence, and support, of this power, and authority, millions of lives have been destroyed. It is enough to make one tremble now, to read the accounts, that we have, in history, of the slaughter and bloodshed, the havock and devastation, which have been, hereby, occasioned, on the face of the earth. Emperors, kings, and princes, have been set on, to murder, and butcher,

cher, their own subjects; or to carry fire, and sword, into the territories of their neighbours; who have gloriously stood up, in defence of that *liberty*, wherewith *Christ* had made them free; and in opposition to this usurped authority; which, indeed, is still claimed. But, blessed be GOD, the exercise of it is, in a good measure, restrained.

Another sad and grievous consequence of the usurping, and exercising, this *power*, and *authority*, is, the *corruption* of the christian doctrine, and worship; and especially of the *doctrine*, which still prevails, in every christian nation, more or less. The *truth*, as it is in *Jesus*, the doctrine of the *gospel*, in its purity and simplicity, is plain, and easy to be understood, by the most illiterate, by men of the meanest capacities, and employed in the lowest stations of life: Which is one argument of it's divine original. — But alas! Such is the humour of the generality of mankind, that they have but mean, low thoughts of things, that are plain, and level to their understandings. They like to hear things wonderful,
and

and surprizing. They revere *mysteries*; doctrines, that are above their comprehension, and understanding: (1) And this humour, the *clergy* have generally gratified, and encouraged, in the people; and have made their advantage of it. How many perplexed, intricate notions; high, metaphysical speculations, have been introduced into the *christian* doctrine; and have been so mixed, and blended, with it, that it is a hard matter, for the greatest part of christians, to distinguish between it and them; and to separate the *wheat* from the *chaff*. Christianity is almost buried, under the rubbish of *divinity*, as it is called; which is become a very difficult, abstruse, and extensive science, as taught, in our *systems*, or *bodies of divinity*; as in those of *Calvin*, *Turretine*, *Marck*, *Piçtet*, &c. So that it requires a great deal of time, and pains, long, laborious reading, and studying, by day light, and candle-light, to become a good, able, *christian divine*; that is, a *christian metaphysician*.

Scholæ,

(1) Θρασύεια γάρ οὔσα ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη Ψυχὴ, τὰ μὲν ἐν ποσὶν ἥκον τιμᾷ, τὸ δὲ ἀπόντος θαυμαστικῶς ἔχει.

Scholæ non vitæ discimus.

I remember the ever memorable Mr. *Hales*, somewhere, in his writings, calls divinity *the supreme empress of sciences.*

Another lamentable consequence of this usurped, *antichristian power*, and *authority*, of the *Church*, hath been a *corruption* of the lives and manners, of christians. It is to be observed, that, as the power and consequently the wealth (for these generally go together) of the *clergy*, have increased, in any nation; as they have succeeded, in their ambitious, and covetous, pursuits; through the favour and countenance of the *civil magistrate*; so, and in the same degree, truth, liberty, virtue, and real religion, have been, always, upon the decline. And ignorance, superstition, and a zeal for religious *trifles*, and metaphysical, unintelligible *jargon*, together with broils, contentions, and envyings, about them; and a dissoluteness of manners, have prevailed, in that nation. — Thus it ever hath been, thus it ever will be; because thus it must be. — The connexion is founded in the

P

nature

nature of things, as might be easily shewn. The more flourishing the *Church* is, in the sunshine of royalty, or civil power; *that is*, the more *power*, and *authority*, the *clergy* are possessed of, the greater wealth and grandeur they are advanced to; the lower, the more upon the decay, will the *Church of Christ*, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, ever be.

We have, in scripture, many *predictions*, and promises, of a much more glorious, and happy state of the *kingdom of Christ*, here on earth, than ever yet hath been; — when universal peace, and righteousness, shall prevail, throughout the world; when the *earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord*, as the waters cover the sea; when men shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. When the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: — But these predictions will never be accomplished, nor this state of the *kingdom of Christ* come, 'till the kingdom of the *priests* be utterly destroyed, from

from off the face of the earth, and abolished, from among the children of men.

A R T I C L E XXVI.

I pass over the *five next articles*, and come now to the *twenty sixth*; where we are told, that, “although, in the visible
“ Church, the evil be mingled with the
“ good, and sometimes the evil have chief
“ authority, in the ministration of the *word*
“ and *sacraments*; yet, forasmuch as they
“ do not the same in their own name, but
“ in *Christ’s*; and do minister, by his com-
“ mission, and authority, we may use their
“ ministry, both in hearing the *word of*
“ God, and in receiving the *sacraments*.”

This seems to me such strange doctrine, that I can never give my assent to it. — How can it be conceived, that the evil, who, by their wicked lives, and bad examples, corrupt men’s manners, and propagate vice and irreligion, in the world; and, in so doing, are the *servants of the devil*; — how can it be conceived, I say, that such men, while they continue such,

have an *authority*, and *commission*, from *Christ*; whom GOD sent, into the world, to bless men, in turning them from their iniquities, — to *minister in holy things*? The ministration of such men is, really, a profanation of the sacred ordinances of religion. And, surely, it cannot be, in the name, and by the authority of *Christ*, that they profane the institutions of *Christ*. They, of all men, are the greatest *enemies of the cross of Christ*; their examples render all their ministrations ineffectual, to any good purpose; at least, they greatly hinder the good effects of them, upon the hearts and lives of those, who attend on their ministry (*m*). And, whereas it is said, “ we
“ may

(*m*) Nullos autem pejús mereri de omnibus mortalibus judico, quam qui *philosophiam*, velut aliquod artificium vanae, didicerunt: Qui aliter vivunt, quam vivendum esse præcipiunt. Exempla enim seipso inutiles disciplinæ circumferunt, nulli non vitio quod insequuntur obnoxii. Non magis mihi potest quisquam talis prodesse præceptor, quam gubernator in tempestate nauseabundus. Tenendum est, rapiente fluctu, gubernaculum, luctandum cum ipso mari, eripienda sunt vento vela: Quid me potest adjuvare rector navigii, attonitus, et vomitans? Quanto majore putas vitam tempestate jactari quam ullam ratem? Non est loquendum, sed gubernandum. Omnia, quæ dicunt, quæ turba audiente jactant,

“ may use their ministry, both in hearing
 “ the word of God, and in receiving the
 “ *sacraments*,” I should choose, for my own
 part, to attend on the ministry of a *lay-*
preacher, who is a good, pious man; than
 of a wicked man, though the hands of the
 two *Arch-bishops* had been laid on his head.

Quid faciendum sit, a facientibus discendum est.

The latter part of the *article* is, in these
 words. “ Nevertheless it appertaineth to
 “ the discipline of the *Church*, that enquiry
 “ be made, of *evil ministers*; and that they
 “ be accused, by those, that have know-
 “ ledge of their offences; and, finally, be-
 “ ing found guilty, by just judgment be de-
 “ posed.” This is an evident inconsistency
 with the former part of the *article*. Here
 is an authority, in the *Church*, or in some,
 who bear office in it, which is superior, or,
 at least, stands in opposition to the *autho-*
rity of Christ, who is *head of the Church*;
 an authority to depose those men from their
 office,

jactant, aliena sunt. Dixit illa *Plato*, dixit *Zeno*, dixit
Chrysippus, *Posidonius*, et ingens agmen tot, et talium. Quo-
 modo probare possint sua esse monstrabo: Faciant, quæ
 dixerint. Senec. Epistol. cviii.

office, or to prohibit, and restrain, them from the exercise of it; from ministering in the *word*, and *sacraments*, — who, at the same time, have an *authority*, and *commission*, according to the former part of the *article*, from *Christ* himself, to minister in them. Who, in the *Church*, will presume, thus to controul the authority of him, whom God gave to be *head over all things, to the Church*; and to set aside his commission?

A R T I C L E XXVII.

The title of the next *article*, is, of *baptism*: Which is thus defined. “*Baptism*”
 “is a sign of *regeneration*, or new birth;
 “whereby, as by an instrument, ***
 “*faith* is confirmed, and *grace* increased,”
that is, in the person baptized; for no other sense, I think, can be put upon the words. “*By virtue of prayer to God,*”

This definition takes in *infant baptism*, as well as adult. Accordingly, it is said, in the very next words, that “the baptism”
 “of young children,” that is of infants,
 “as appears from the practice of the *Church*”
 “of

“ of England, is, in any wise, to be retained, in the Church; as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.” Now, it is evident, and what all will allow, that an infant, a child of a week, or a month, or a twelve-month old, hath not any notion of moral good or evil; or any power of self-determination, upon rational motives. And, therefore, is a subject, utterly incapable of having *faith*, or *grace*; that is, any virtuous or religious disposition, wrought in, or communicated to, it. — I cannot, therefore, *ex animo*; that is, honestly, acknowledge this proposition; that, “ by baptism, as by an instrument, *faith* is confirmed, and *grace* increased,” in infants, to be agreeable to the word of God.

Moreover; to say, that *grace* is increased, in infants, by baptism, implies, that they had *grace*, before baptism; which seems (if, by *grace*, is meant any religious, or morally good, disposition of mind) to contradict the ninth article, of original, or birth-sin; which is there said to be the fault, or corruption, of the nature of every man; that naturally is engendered of the offspring of

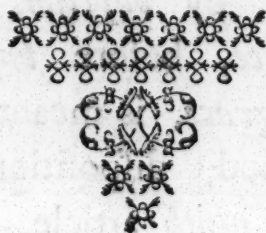
112 L E T T E R V.

of Adam, and the thirteenth article, of works done, before the grace of Christ.

I acknowledge, with gratitude, your moderation and candor, in patiently hearing my difficulties, and objections; without ordering me, by your peremptory command, not to trouble you, with any more letters of this nature. — A great deal of my temporal and everlasting happiness is depending upon the result. —

I am,

Reverend and Honoured Sir, &c.



L E T T E R



LETTER VI. and last.

From the N E P H E W.

Reverend and Honoured Sir,

 Now sit down to write the last letter to you, after which, I shall be impatient for your answer.

A R T I C L E XXXVI.

I shall take notice but of one *article* more; and that is the *thirty sixth*, which is expressed in these words. “The book of
“consecration of Arch-bishops and Bishops,
“and ordering of Priests and Deacons,
“lately set forth, in the time of *Edward*
“*the sixth*, and confirmed, at the same
“time, by the authority of parliament,
“doth contain all things necessary to such
“consecration, and ordering; neither hath
Q “any

“any thing, that, of itself, is superstitious, or ungodly.”

That this *book of consecration* doth contain all things, necessary to such consecration and ordering, as this *book* appoints, and is a *directory* of; — will be readily allowed by any one; even without ever looking into the said *book*, or knowing any thing of what is contained in it. But to know whether the other part of the account, here given of it, that *it hath not any thing, that, of itself, is superstitious and ungodly*, be true, or not; we must have recourse to the *book* itself. And here I shall take notice only of two passages in it; to which, I am inclined to think, the compilers had a particular view, in the last sentence of this *article*. The *first* passage is, in the *form* of ordering the *Priests*. “Receive the Holy
“*Ghost*, for the office and work of a *Priest*,
“in the *Church of God*, now committed
“unto thee, by the imposition of our
“hands. Whose sins thou do’st forgive,
“they are forgiven; and whose sins thou
“do’st retain, they are retained.”

The

The *second* is in the form of consecrating of *Bishops*; “receive the *Holy Ghost*, for “the office and work of a *Bishop*, in the “*Church of God*, now committed unto “thee, by the imposition of our hands. “And remember that thou stir up the *grace* “of *God*, which is given thee, by *impo-* “*sition of our hands.*”

This amazing power, which is as high above the power of the *kings* and *emperors* of this world; as the heavens are above the earth; of giving the *Holy Ghost* to every *Priest*; whom they ordain; and of investing him with a *power* to *forgive* and *retain*, *sins*; — this power, I say, the *Bishops of the Church of England* assume, and appropriate, to their own order; as successors of the *apostles*, according to what Doctor *Whitby* says (*a*), “this (*that is*, this use, or practice, of the *apostles*, which he had been speaking of, before) “may well be deemed “a fit pattern for *Bishops* to follow, in the “apostolical rite of *confirmation*, and *ordi-* “*nation*, by laying on of hands. By which

Q 2

“rite

(a) Commentary, &c. Acts viii. 15.

“rite, they, as *successors of the apostles*,
 “confer the *ordinary gifts of the Holy*
 “*Ghost*; as the *apostles* did, the *extraordi-*
 “*nary gifts of the same spirit.*” — What
 truth there is in this last assertion of the
Doctor's, I shall consider below.

Doctor Sherlock, likewise, tells us (b)
 that “judging who shall be received into,
 “or cast out of, *Christ's family*, which is
 “called a *power of remitting, or retain-*
 “*ing sins*: Because the *forgiveness of sins*
 “is to be had, only in the communion of
 “the *Church*, is the highest act of *Church*
 “*authority*, on earth. **** And, therefore,
 “this *authority* is not intrusted with every
 “*gospel-minister*; but is committed to the
 “*chief governors of the Church*, the *Bi-*
 “*shops*; who succeed into the ordinary *apost-*
 “*olical power.*”

Now; suppose (for what has been, may
 be again — suppose) any particular *Bishop*
 to be a man of a bad, moral character; to
 be proud, covetous, cruel, and revengful;
 he is, notwithstanding, as truly a *successor*
 of

(b) Funeral Sermon on Dr. Benjamin Calamy.

of the apostles, as the best of them all. And, therefore, he can (if this power belongs to the *Bishops*, as *successors* of the apostles) confer the *Holy Ghost* on, and give grace to, any *Priest*, whom he shall ordain; though he be himself a *graceless* person; though he be himself destitute of the *Holy Ghost*, both of his *ordinary*, and *extraordinary gifts*; — and can, not only forgive, or retain, other men's sins; but, likewise, give another power to do the same; — though his own sins be retained; though he hath never obtained the *forgiveness* of them, from God; being still impenitent, and in the bond of iniquity. And this is agreeable with the sense of the *compilers*, in the *twenty sixth article*; where it is said, that “*evil ministers* do not minister, in their “own name, but in *Christ's*, and by his commission and authority.” But whatever it is agreeable with, it doth not seem to me to be *according to godliness*; but, on the contrary, to be an ungodly, as well as absurd, doctrine.

But, supposing that the *Bishops* of the *Church of England* are the *successors* of the *apostles*;

apostles; I would fain know how, or by the help of what passage of *scripture*, they can infer the *power*, in question. Those words, in the *book of consecration*, &c. taken from *scripture* (c), are not the words of an *apostle*, but of *Christ* himself; which were spoken to the *apostles*. Now the *Bishops* cannot claim *all* that *power* and *authority*; which belonged unto *Christ*; unless they are *successors* to *him*, as well as to the *apostles*; and are invested with the same offices as *he* was. Which I do not know that ever any *Bishop*, *popish*, or *protestant*, pretended to be; unless it be the *Pope*, in styling himself the *vicar-general* of *Christ*, here on earth. From thence, then, they can never infer, that they have *this power*. — Let us try this way of reasoning. Our Saviour said, to his *apostles*, when he sent them forth to preach the *gospel*, “Receive ye the *Holy Ghost*. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained;” therefore, the *Bishops* of the *Church of England*, as *successors of the apostles*, have a power to confer the *Holy Ghost*,
on

(c) John xx. 22, 23.

on every *Priest*, whom they *ordain*; and to invest him with a power to *forgive*, and *retain*, *sins*. — I say, let us try this way of reasoning, in another instance. “*Christ* rebuked the winds; and said, to the sea, *peace, be still*. And the winds, and the sea, obeyed him; therefore the said *Bishops*, as, *successors of the apostles*, have *power* over the *winds* and *sea*.” — If this reasoning will not hold, in this instance; neither will it, in the other. And I cannot but think, that the *Bishops* laying on of their hands, and their saying, *receive the Holy Ghost*, have as little effect, as their rebuking the *winds* and the *sea*, would have.

There is one thing, which I would beg leave here to take notice of; though it doth not directly belong to my present purpose; *that is*, the *Bishops* omitting to breathe upon the person, or persons, to be ordained. Which omission, I cannot tell how to account for: Because, it is said, that *Christ* *breathed* upon his *apostles*; and said unto them, *receive ye the Holy Ghost* —. Whereas, we have no account of his laying his hands upon them.

I should

I should be glad to be satisfied about the true meaning of these words, *the Holy Ghost*, in this *form of ordination*, and *consecration*. They are, I think, generally understood to mean, not the person of the *Holy Ghost*; who, in the *first article*, is said to be *the third person in the unity of the Godhead*; and, in the *fifth*, to be *very and eternal God*; but the *gifts* of the *Holy Ghost*. But then, “What are the *gifts*, here meant? “The *ordinary*, or *extraordinary*?” The *extraordinary*, that is the *supernatural*, *gifts*, or *miraculous powers*, of the *Holy Ghost*; which have long since ceased, in the *christian Church*, the *Bishops* do not pretend to confer. The weakness of such a pretence would be evident, to every one, that can see, and hear. For, if *such gifts* were conferred, they would have some sensible effects. And, as for the *ordinary gifts* of the *spirit*; that is, the *christian virtues* or *graces*; good, moral religious dispositions of heart; — it doth not appear, in fact, that these are conferred upon the persons, *ordained*, or *consecrated*, by virtue of those words, and *imposition of hands*, that they,

they, who, before, were without the *Holy Ghost*, in this sense, are, at the instant of their *ordination*, or *consecration*, indued with it; and, all at once, are become, not only *relatively*, but *really*, and *personally* holy, good, pious men —. Is it not strange then, that *Doctor Whitby*, in the passage above quoted, should positively assert it, as an allowed matter of fact, that *the Bishops*, by *laying on of hands*, confer the ordinary gifts of the *Holy Ghost*: Of which, if he had been required to produce one instance, upon good authority, I am satisfied, he would have been hard put to, to do it.

One should think, according to this *form*, that all, who come to be *ordained*, or *consecrated*, are reckoned, by the *ordainers*, to be without the *Holy Ghost*, before the *imposition of hands*; though the persons, to be *ordained*, seem to have a better opinion of themselves; when they say, “they trust, they *are moved*, by the *Holy Ghost*, to take upon them their office.” For these words *receive the Holy Ghost*, suppose, that, before, they had not the *Holy Ghost*.

R

If

If we understand these words, the *Holy Ghost*, in this last sense, as signifying his *ordinary gifts*, such a sudden change would, be something *miraculous*. And the manner, in which these *gifts* are supposed to be conveyed, is *extraordinary*. For the usual, *ordinary* manner, as I apprehend, in which men are renewed in the spirit of their minds, is, by the influence, which religious truths, and principles, reasons, and motives, frequently considered, and duly attended to, have upon their minds; upon the temper and disposition of their hearts, through the inexplicable operation of the *spirit of God*: And to effect this change, to produce pious, and good affections, and dispositions, in an unrenewed heart, takes up some time. I own a strong impression may, of a sudden, be made, upon a man's mind, upon some occasions; and may precede such a change; but it is not the thing itself. Now if it be not true, that the *Bishops* do, in the use of this *form*, confer the *Holy Ghost*, or his *gifts*, ordinary, or extraordinary; —— then it is not true, in any sense. And, therefore, I cannot but think, that the using of it,

it, is, in them, highly presumptuous: And shews, if not a contempt of *sacred* things, at least a want of that regard and reverence, which is due to them.

As I have made it evident, I think, that the *twentieth article* ascribes a *power*, and *authority*, to the *Church*, which do not belong to it; so I shall here endeavour to shew, that the *Bishops*, in the use of this *form*, in the *book of consecration*, &c. do assume, to themselves, *powers*, greater, than appears, in the *new testament*, to be ever given, by *Christ*, to any but his *apostles*; whose *successors* they call themselves.

Indeed, our Saviour said to his *apostles*, "receive ye the *Holy Ghost*." And it does appear that they had a power of giving the *Holy Ghost* to others. So *St. Peter* and *St. John* laid their hands upon the *Samaritane* converts, and conferred upon them the *gifts* of the *holy spirit*. [Acts viii. 14, &c.] And *St. Paul* did the like, to twelve disciples, at *Ephesus*; by prayer, and imposition of hands. [Acts xix. 2, &c.] And it is highly probable that all the *apostles* had such an ex-

traordinary power. But there is not, in *scripture*, any proof, that any other persons ever had such a power, in the days of the *apostles*; much less after their decease.

Permit me farther to observe, that none of the *apostles* ever used that *authoritative, imperative* form of speech, *Receive the Holy Ghost*, as the *Bishops*, do, to every *Priest*, at his *ordering*. Herein, therefore, they act, as if they were above the *apostles*; or in some higher office than they were in; as if they were the *successors* of *Christ* himself, — which is not only absurd, and inconsistent with their professing themselves to be *successors of the apostles*; but, likewise, (if one might say so, without offence) rather too ambitious, and assuming,

So, likewise, is their presuming to invest every *Priest*, whom they ordain, with a *power of remitting and retaining sins*. Which the *apostles* never took upon them to do, on any occasion whatever: *That is*, they never said to those, on whom they laid their hands, “ Whose sins, ye remit, they
“ are remitted, unto them; and whose sins,
“ ye

“ye retain, they are retained.” They never pretended to give this power to others: Nay they had it not themselves in that high sense, in which some have claimed it, since their time.

The power of forgiving and retaining sins, which the *Bishops*, and *Priests*, in the *Church of England*, assume to themselves, is, as they seem to understand it, and to be willing that others should understand it too; — far superior to that, which our Saviour gave to his *apostles*; when he said unto them, “Whosoever sins ye remit, they “are remitted unto them; and whosoever “sins ye retain they are retained.” A power! which can really belong to none, but God himself; and him, to whom God hath given all power, in heaven and earth. As God is the only, supreme, universal law-giver, and governour, of the world; as all men are under law to him, and bound by it, that is the *law* of their creation, the *moral* law; which he hath written upon their hearts; he only can have an original, underived *power*, and *authority*, to forgive sin; *that is*, to remit the punishment, annexed,

nexed, by the law, to the transgression of it; or to free and release the transgressor, from the evil; to which he, by his transgression, had subjected himself; and which, according to justice, and the strict execution of the law, he might have suffered. —

This *power*, I say, belongs originally, to GOD only. Nor is it possible for us to discover, by reason, or the light of nature, that he hath delegated any one, or more, under him; and invested him, or them, with *authority to forgive sins*, in the sense, now defined. Which, I think, is the only true, and proper sense; Because God's doing so, depends intirely, upon his free will and pleasure. The discovery of this, therefore, must be made, if made at all, by *revelation*.

When our Saviour said, to the man, taken with the palsy, *man, thy sins are forgiven thee*, the Scribes and Pharisees began to reason, saying, *Who is this, which speaketh blasphemies?* And their reasoning would certainly have been just, if *Christ* had not been invested of GOD, with *power to forgive sin*. Whoever, therefore, on earth, claims such
a *power*

a power, he must, to make good his claim, produce his commission from heaven, he must bring with him, strong and clear testimonials, and evidences, that *this power* is committed to him, of GOD; which never any one yet did, but *Jesus of Nazareth*. To shew to those men, who had charged him with blasphemy, that he had power on earth to forgive sins, he said to the sick of the palsy, (d) *I say unto thee arise, take up thy couch, and go into thy house; and immediately he arose, and took up that whereon he lay*. And, as he proved, by working miracles, that he had power, on earth, to forgive sins; so GOD raised him from the dead, and exalted him with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. *He hath the key of David. He openeth, and no man shuteth; and shuteth, and no man openeth*.

Let us then consider, in what sense, we are to understand these words of *Christ*, *Whose sins ye remit, &c.* They were spoken, by him, some time after his resurrection,

(d) Luke V.

on, and I think the true meaning of them will best appear, from some other passages, where we have an account of the commission, or charge, which *Christ* gave them, as his *apostles*, between his resurrection and ascension; during which time, he, *through the Holy Ghost*, gave commandments to the *apostles*, whom he had chosen; for their direction and instruction, in the discharge of their apostleship; and likewise, from those passages, which give us an account of the manner, in which they did discharge it, after his ascension; in pursuance of the orders, and instructions, that they had received, from their Lord and Master. For they were to *teach men to observe all things, whatsoever he had commanded them.*

Saint *Mark* tells us (e) how “ he appeared to them, while they were at meat, “ and said unto them, Go ye into all the “ world, and preach the gospel, to every “ creature.” And what this *gospel* was, in short, we are told, in the next verse. “ He, that believeth, and is baptized, shall “ be saved; but he, that believeth not, shall “ be

(e) Mark xvi. 15.

“be damned.” Which implies, that the *sins* of the former should be *remitted*; and the *sins* of the latter, *retained*. In another place (*f*) it is said, that “he opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behoved *Christ* to suffer, and to rise again, the third day; and that repentance, and remission of sins, should be preached, in his name, among all nations, beginning at *Jerusalem*.” In *his name*, that is, by his *authority*, in obedience to his command, as his *apostles* and *ministers*.

Now; let us see how the apostles discharged their office, in obedience to their Lord and Master. Of this, we have an account, in the history of their acts. — *Peter* preaching to the people, at *Jerusalem*, exhorted them (*g*) to repent, and to be converted, that their *sins* might be blotted out. He likewise, assured the high-priest, with the rulers and elders, (*b*) that there is

S

none

(*f*) Luke xxiv. 45, 46, 47.

(*g*) Acts iii. 19.

(*b*) Acts iv. 12.

none other name, under heaven, given, among men, whereby they could be saved; and, in that place before quoted, he tells the same persons, that *Christ* was exalted *to be a Prince, and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.* — To the same purpose is what *Saint Paul* preached, to the people, at *Antioch* (i). “Be it
 “known unto you, therefore, men and
 “brethren, that, through this man, is
 “preached unto you the *forgiveness of sins.*
 “And, by him, all, that believe, are justified, from all things; from which, ye
 “could not be justified, by the law of *Moses.*”

From these texts of *scripture*, it evidently appears, that the commission, or authority, which the *apostles* received, from *Christ*, was only to *preach the gospel.* The sum and substance of which, is, according to their preaching, “repentance toward
 “God, and faith toward our *Lord Jesus*
 “*Christ*,” to publish the glad tidings of salvation, through *Christ*, to all the world; declaring to all, *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*,
 “that

(i) Acts xiii. 38, 39.

“ that whoever repented, and believed in
 “ him, their sins should be forgiven, and
 “ they should be saved.”

They were, indeed, endued with *power*
from on high, and did work *miracles*, to
 prove the truth of their doctrine, and their
 being sent, by *Christ*, to preach it; but not
 to prove that they had a *power to forgive*
sins, as he himself did. Nor did any one of
 them preach forgiveness, in his own name.
 We do not find, that any one of them ever
 said to any, *I absolve thee*, or *I forgive thee*.
 The meaning, therefore, of that passage,
 in *Saint John*, is, “ that, whosoever sins
 “ they should declare, according to *Christ’s*
 “ instructions, and as his ministers, to be
 “ forgiven, they should be forgiven; and
 “ whosoever sins they should thus declare
 “ to be retained, they should be retained:
 “ Or, that whoever complied with the terms,
 “ of the *gospel*, published by them; and in
 “ which they had been instructed by *Christ*,
 “ their sins should be forgiven, and who-
 “ ever would not, their sins should be re-
 “ tained (k).

S 2

But,

(k) Aliter *ἀποστειλάς* dicitur de apostolis, aliter de Deo,
Græc. in loc.

But, though the apostles had not *power* to forgive sin, yet they had an *authority*, properly speaking, to preach the doctrine of *forgiveness*, upon *repentance*: Because they were, by *Christ*, constituted the first preachers of it, to the world, to *Jews*, and *Gentiles*. And in confirmation of their mission, they had, as I observed before, a *power* of working *miracles*. “God bearing
“them witness, both with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts
“of the Holy Ghost, according to his own
“will.” — But now, since this doctrine hath been revealed to us, in the *gospel*; to declare to any one, that, if he doth repent of his sins, they are forgiven him; if he doth not, that they are retained; implies in it, nothing at all, of authority, or power in any sense. Any one, surely, may now declare this, upon the *authority* of the *word* of God.

What remains, farther to be considered, is, in what sense the *Clergy of the Church of England* do understand these words, *whose sins thou do'st forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou do'st retain, they*
are

are retained; when pronounced, at the ordering of a *priest*; and what is that *power* and *authority*, which he is supposed to be invested with, in consequence, or by virtue of the pronunciation of them, and the imposition of hands.—Now this will best appear from the *form of absolution*, in the order for the *visitation of the sick*.—After the sick person's profession of his belief of the *articles of the apostles creed*, and *confession of his sins*, the *priest* is ordered to *absolve him* (if he *humbly and heartily desires it*) in this sort,

Of the sick person's *humbly and heartily desiring it*, I think there can be no doubt, if he really believes, that the *priest* can, effectually, absolve him; and that his absolution will be ratified in heaven.—Then follows the *form of absolution*, in these words. “Our
“ *Lord Jesus Christ*, who hath left *power* to
“ his *church*, to *absolve* all sinners, who truly repent, and believe in him,—of his
“ great mercy, forgive thee thine offences.
“ And, by his *authority*, committed to me, I
“ absolve thee, from all thy sins. In the
“ name of the *Father*, and of the *Son*, and
“ of the *Holy Ghost*.”

Here

Here, I think, the *priest* exalts himself, far above the *apostles*. We never hear them talking of any *power*, which they had, to *forgive sin*, or to *absolve* the sinner. They only preached repentance and remission of sin, in the name of *Christ*; as was before observed. But the *clergy*, not only the *Romish*; but likewise the *English, Protestant, Clergy*, have gone beyond this. Here they pretend, that our Lord *Jesus Christ* hath left power, to the *Church*, (that is, to the *clergy*; for so, I suppose, the word, *Church*, is here to be understood, though the *Church*, in the *nineteenth article*, is defined to be, *a congregation of faithful men*, &c. But here the *clergy* are represented, as having a power from *Christ*) to *absolve all sinners, who truly repent, and believe in him*.——In these words is plainly enough implied, if they have any meaning at all, something, that is very strange, something contrary to the plain, express declarations of the *gospel*; namely, that, though a sinner doth truly repent, and believe in *Christ*, yet his sins are not pardoned, till he is absolved by the *Church*; and that the absolution of the *priest* is one necessary condition of the forgiveness

ness of sin; and, consequently, of salvation. For if, when a sinner truly repents, and believes in *Christ*, his sins are thereupon forgiven, and he is *ipso facto* absolved; as the *gospel* teaches us; then the absolution of the *priest* is a mere pretence, and signifies nothing. The priest doth not, he cannot *absolve* him; because he is already *absolved*, from *all his sins*; being supposed to be a true penitent. If he be not, his sins are still *retained*; though the *church*, or the *priest*, should pretend to *absolve* him.

In what light, then, are we to consider what follows, “And, by his *authority*, committed to me, I *absolve* thee.”——Here, the *priest*, unconditionally, and positively, *absolves* the sick person; or *pretends* to absolve him; though he had been, in the whole course of his life, until then, ever so wicked. For the *order*, for the *visitation*, is the same, as to all sick persons; without any regard to their past life, and character.——Is not this a meer farce and mockery? which is of no more force, hath no more effect, than if one criminal should say to his fellow-criminals, fast shut up, with him, in the same prison,
“ I ab-

“ I absolve you from all your crimes, for
 “ which you are imprisoned ; they are all
 “ pardoned.” Is not this trifling with God,
 and with the souls of men ? It is not in the
power of all the *deists*, in the world, to ex-
 pose the *christian religion*, and the *ministers*
of the gospel, to contempt, more than the
clergy do, hereby, expose them.——I hope,
 Sir, you will excuse my warmth here. For
 a poor, miserable sinner, to stand up ; and
 with a grave countenance, and haughty tone,
 tell his fellow-sinner, (though sometimes
 not so great a sinner, as himself) *By the autho-*
rity of Christ, committed unto me, I absolve thee
from all thy sins, is——What ? ——I am
 really unwilling to give it the hard name,
 which it deserves.

The notion of such a *power*, in the *clergy*,
 if firmly believed, and universally entertain-
 ed, would give them an *absolute dominion* over
 the *fortunes*, and lives, of the laity. And,
 very likely, it was, with a view of obtaining
 such a *dominion* ; that they have laid claim to
 such a *monstrous power*. Who would dare to
 resist, or any way provoke, this huge, *Church-*
Leviathan ? Who would refuse to do, or to
 give,

give, any thing, to obtain, and secure, the favour of one, whom he thought, had *power* to let him into, or shut him out of, *heaven*; to fix his state of happiness, or misery, forever, as he pleased; but there is no such *power*, on *earth*. No! The obtaining the forgiveness of our sins, and the favour of God *Almighty*, doth not, blessed be his name, depend upon the will and pleasure of any *priest*, or number of *priests*. *Christ* hath, in his *gospel*, unalterably settled and established, the conditions of *our forgiveness*. And let him, that can, shew that the *absolution of a priest* is one of them. And, if this cannot be shewn, but the contrary is certain, and evident; then such *absolution* is all *ludus, et jocus*, but very profane, and of very dangerous consequence.

From what has been said, upon the two passages, in the *book of consecration*, &c. above quoted; it seems evident to me, that there is something in itself *ungodly*, in the *said book*. And, therefore, I cannot, *ex animo*, subscribe to that *article*; which says there is not any such thing, in it.

T

IF

If any, in defence, or excuse, of the *Bishops*, and in answer to the *remarks*, above made, on those passages, should say, “ that
“ they (the *Bishops*) do not, themselves, be-
“ lieve, that they do really give the *Holy*
“ *Ghost*, in any sense ; or a power to forgive,
“ or retain, sins, to a man, when they or-
“ *dain*, or make, him a *Priest*, but use these
“ words, *receive the Holy Ghost*, &c. only as
“ a prescribed *form*, made ready to their
“ hands, and of long standing.” — This,
I think, would not be in their favour ; but
would rather be a severe accusation, brought
against them.

Thus, Sir, I have laid before you one great
objection, that I have, against entering in-
to *orders* ; namely, “ that this cannot be
“ done, without *subscribing* the *thirty nine*
“ *articles*.”

Though you were so good, as to allow
me the liberty, of declaring the real senti-
ments of my mind, to you, freely, and with-
out reserve ; to lay my objections as strong
as I could ; and to urge them, as far as I
thought

thought they would fairly go ; — yet I know not, whether I have always preserved that decency, and propriety, in my address to you, which I ought to have done ; and shewn that respect to your character ; and the relation, that is between us, which they deserve. If I have not, the only apology I can make, for this my defect, is, that I could not always carry these in my thoughts, and have them present to my mind ; especially when I was most intent upon my subject ; and somewhat affected with it. And, if I have offended, in this respect, Sir, I heartily ask your pardon. — But, whatever freedom I have used with you, I have used none with my subject. — I am not sensible, that I have pushed my objection farther than it will fairly go ; or laid more stress upon it, than it will bear. And those passages, in the *articles*, upon which I have made any remarks, I have taken, I think, in their true sense ; *that is*, as in all other writings, the sense, intended by the authors ; and am not conscious to myself, of having wrested, or given a wrong turn to, or drawn a forced inference from, any one sentence in them. — I have given you the reasons why I cannot *subscribe* them, *honest-*

ly, and *with a good conscience*. And against my *conscience*, against the convictions of my own mind, I would not do it, for all the world,

I have my daily failings, some omissions, some deviations from the strict rule of my duty to charge myself with, before God, every evening. Yet, as I have to do with a merciful God, who hath, in the gospel, promised forgiveness to the humble, sincere penitent; and have an advocate, at his right hand, I can now think, and meditate, with pleasure, on Him, who is the Father of my spirit: — The highest exercise, and noblest employment, that any created mind can be engaged in! It rejoices my heart to think, that the administration of the universe is in the hands of an infinitely, and unchangeably, good, wise, and powerful Being; that my constant, intire dependence is upon him; that I may, with the greatest safety, rely on his power to protect, his wisdom to guide, and his goodness to befriend me; through the whole of my duration, in this, and in another world. I can, now, lift up mine eyes to heaven. I can, now, go to God, the au-
thor

thor of all good, and the kind parent of all his rational offspring; and, with some degree of faith and hope, make my addressee to him. I can, now, be alone, without dismal, gloomy apprehensions. Nor do I think myself lonely, and desolate; though I see not the face, nor hear the voice, of *man*. I can retire, and commune with God, and *my own heart*. And those hours of my life, which I have spent in secret, have been the most delightful, of any, in the whole course of it. Now, I bless God, I am not in *bondage*, through *fear of Death*. I can look forward to the period of my life; and think on the dissolution of my frame; without any uneasiness; hoping, and trusting, in God; that, when I am entering the dark passage, out of *time*, into *eternity*, his presence will then be with me; to light my soul through it; and that he will give his ministers of grace, charge of my departing spirit; to convey it to those blessed mansions, which *Christ* is gone before, to prepare, in his father's house. At present, this is the state of my mind; which is attended with such inward light and peace, such comfort and satisfaction of heart;

heart ; that nothing, within the whole compass of God's creation, can compensate the loss of them. I must, therefore, be wholly abandoned, and forsaken of God (which I trust I never shall be) to part with these, for the sake of a paultry living. And such in comparison with these, is the *Arch-bishoprick of Canterbury*, to be considered.

And part with these I must, were I to *subscribe* ; while I have the same notion of *subscribing*, as I now have. They would soon leave my guilty, polluted breast, and fly away. Then darkness, confusion, and perplexity, would immediately come, in their room ; and take possession of it. Self-dislike, remorse, and fear, would distract, and rend, my soul. For I could not help considering myself, as having departed from God ; renounced all interest in his favour ; turned my back upon heaven ; and my face towards hell and destruction. I should then ;
 — oh horrid state of mind ! — Be afraid of God, of the author of my being, of the Almighty, who hath an absolute power over me ; and *is able, to destroy both soul and body in hell.* — I should not be
 able

able to make any application to the God of my life, to the father of mercies, 'till I had repented of what I had done. I should not have courage to look into my own heart. I should be afraid of my own conscience, *that* God within me. Nor could I bear to think on my latter end; on the judgment of the great day; and the sentence, that shall then be past, on the righteous, and the wicked. — But no more of this disagreeable supposition. — In what I have just now wrote, relating to the sentiments, and apprehensions, of my own heart; I have used the more freedom; as I know I am writing to one, who will not put any hard, unfavourable construction upon it.

I have drawn out these *letters*, and especially this *last*, to so great a length, that I am afraid, I have tired your patience. Therefore, to make what haste I can, to a conclusion, I shall but just mention another *objection*, against my conforming, as a *clergyman*.

You say, Sir, in your *letter*, that “ after
“ all, that hath been offered, by the *Dis-*
“ *senters*,

“*senters*, against our *ecclesiastical constitution*,
 “ they have not been able to make it ap-
 “ pear, that there is any thing in it, that
 “ hath, in itself, a tendency to frustrate the
 “ end and design of the appointment of the
 “ *christian ministry* ;” ——— plainly intimat-
 ing, thereby, that if any such thing could
 be made to appear, it would be a good and
 sufficient reason against *conformity*, at least
 as a minister.

Now, the end of this appointment being
 to instruct men, in the whole will, and
 counsel of God, as revealed in the *gospel* ;
 to guide them, by their doctrine ; and lead
 them by their example ; in the way to hea-
 ven ; and to exhort, and press them, to
 walk steddily in it, to the end ; and so se-
 cure their eternal salvation, ——— whatever
 tends to destroy, or weaken, the principles
 of *religion*, in the human mind ; to cor-
 rupt men’s hearts ; to countenance them,
 and make them easy in their sins ; or to
 hinder, wholly, or in part, the great mo-
 tives to a holy life, set before them, in the
gospel, from having their proper influence,
 and effect, upon their hearts and lives ; ———
 that

that must, evidently, have a tendency, in the same degree, to frustrate the end and design of the *gospel ministry*. And “that “there are some things, in the very *constitution of the Church of England*, that have “this tendency,” is my *second objection* against my being *ordained a minister*, in *that Church*. Which if I can shew, (as I think, I can) in several particulars, to be the truth of the case, my objection must be allowed to be good. — But this I shall defer, to another time, for the reason above mentioned. And because I should choose, if you please, to have your *answer* to my *first objection*, before I enter upon the *second*. That favour, I desire, as soon as conveniently may be. — Which will greatly oblige,

Honoured and Reverend Sir,

Your most dutiful,

most obedient Servant,

H. M.

U LETTER



L E T T E R II.

From the U N C L E.

Dear Cousin,

Have read all your *letters*, once
 I over, and shall soon give them
 another reading. I wish you had
 proceeded to the prosecution of your *second*
objection; and produced the particular in-
 stances, which (you think) will prove the
 truth of what is asserted in it. Which if
 they really do, I will allow it to be unan-
 swerable. — My reason for wishing so,
 is, because my answering your *first* *objec-
 tion*, supposing I should do it, to your intire
 satisfaction, would be to no purpose; at least,
 it would not answer my end; unless I
 should meet with the same success, in my
 attempt to answer your *second*; or any o-
 ther, that you may have. For, 'till they are
 all answered, you would still have the same,
 general

general reason, against *conforming*, as you now have; *namely*, "that you could not do it with the intire approbation of your own mind." And, whether I should, or not, is to me uncertain. For what may seem to me, to be a sufficient *answer*, may not be so, in your opinion, or judgment. I would, therefore, have you produce all your *objections*, together with your reasons, in proof, and support of them. And, when I have them all before me, I will, if my health permit, sit down to consider them with attention. And, I assure you, with impartiality. And will let you know my thoughts upon them.

As to your *first objection*, which you have urged; — in *answer* to it, I will not undertake to prove, that all, and every one, of the *thirty nine articles* are agreeable to the *word of God*; because, I am sure I should fail in the undertaking. But, if I make it appear, that a man may *honestly subscribe them*, though he *doth not believe* them to be so; you will, then, I suppose, own the *objection* to be fully answered; and this difficulty to be removed. I acknowledge you

have set some things, in a different light, from what they ever appeared in, to me, before. And, if, upon farther consideration, I am convinced that they are set in a true light, I shall freely own it to you; and be ready to do so, to all the world.

You apprehend you have not pushed your *objection* farther, than it will fairly go. Whether you have, or not, I shall consider, when I have heard farther from you. But have you not, in some parts of your *letters*, taken more liberty, than you needed to have done; barely to inforce your *objection*. I do not mean with respect to myself, but to the *ecclesiastical establishment of the nation*; and the *clergy*, in general,

However, I was much pleased, in reading your letters, to observe, that serious turn of mind, that reverence of God, and that strict, conscientious regard to your duty; which, without affectation, are discovered, through the whole of them. At which, I am the more rejoiced, as I have contributed something towards the forming, and settling,
in

in you, such a happy temper and disposition of soul. And I congratulate myself upon it. I may say as Seneca doth, to his *Lucilius* (a).

Affero te mihi. Meum opus es.

Whatever your final determination may be, about taking orders, go on to cultivate, cherish, and improve every pious, every good, affection, in your heart, as the same *divine author* exhorts his friend,

Ad bonam mentem, magno cursu, ac totis viribus, tende.

Or (to use the expression of *a more divine author* to the same purpose) *reaching forth unto the things, which are before, press toward the mark.* — And God Almighty will be with you, and bless you.

J. M.



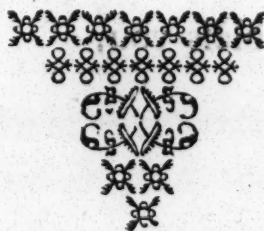
P O S T.

(a) Epistol. xxxiv.

P O S T S C R I P T.

I desire you would be as expeditious, as you can, in drawing up your *objections*, and sending them to me. For, about the latter end of next month, I purpose, God *willing*, to go the journey; which, you know, the discharge of my duty obliges me to take, yearly.

Farewel, my dear *Harry*, and the blessing of God be with you forever!



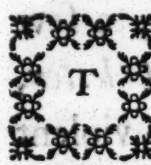
A P P E N -



A N

A P P E N D I X,

By the EDITOR.


 HOUGH it be but of little significance to the *public*, to know, how the *original letters*, from which these were copied, came into my hands; yet I am willing to satisfy the curious reader, in this point; by informing him, that they were put into my hands, in order to publish them, if I thought proper to do it, by an intimate friend of mine, son to the gentleman, mentioned in the beginning of the *first letter*; and who was the elder, and survivor, of the two brothers. I was not at liberty to set down the *names*, subscribed to the *letters* in full; being under an engagement to conceal them. Nor

was

was I allowed to date them. — Excepting these two omissions, and leaving out the accounts of two private family affairs, in the beginning of the *first letter*, these here are exact copies.

When I had read the *letters* over, I found that the correspondence was not carried on, so far, as it appears, from them, it was designed to be. I therefore asked my friend, whether he was sure he had no more *letters* by him, relating to the same subject. He told me he was; for that the uncle, a few days after he had wrote his *second letter*, the last of these, was seized with a violent disorder, which soon carried him off: And that the nephew, died within two years after him. But, when I expressed some concern, upon his giving me this account, he farther told me, that, among the papers of the latter, which were then in his custody, there was a sheet, which contained some loose hints, and indigested materials, which he supposed were designed, when connected, and put into proper order, to form the *second objection*, mentioned at the end of the *sixth letter*, as they all related to it.

And

And this, likewise, my friend, upon my desiring him to favour me with a sight of it, was so kind as to put it into my hands, giving me liberty to do with it, what I thought fit. I have looked over it, but what use to make of it, I am not yet determined, in my own mind, nor shall be, 'till I see what reception these papers meet with, and what notice is taken of them, by those, whom it principally concerns to consider the subject of them.

The young gentleman, the writer of the *six letters*, seems to have been, in every respect, well qualified, in himself, for discharging the ministerial office, and for promoting the great and excellent design of it. And it must, I should think, raise a concern, in every one's mind, who wishes well to the success of the *gospel*, and the best interests of mankind, to think, that any thing should be required, and insisted on, as a term of, or a qualification for, officiating, as a *minister*, in our *established Church*; which such a man could not comply with; without doing violence to his own conscience: And which no man, unless he be-

X

lieves

believes all, and every one, of the *thirty nine articles to be agreeable to the word of God*, can honestly comply with. The old gentleman, as much as he had studied the controversy, would perhaps, have found it as hard a task to prove, that a man may lawfully *subscribe* them, in the manner and form required, though he doth not believe them to be so, as to prove that they are so.

This requirement of *subscription* can exclude none, from the *ministry of the Church*, but honest, upright men, who fear God; with whom the consideration of their duty is of greater weight, and hath more power and influence over them, to determine them, in all their actions, than any other consideration whatever; and who are likely, as being such, most effectually to promote the end of the *gospel-ministry*, even the *edifying of the body of Christ*, could they be admitted into the sacred office.

As for *men*, who have no *fear of God*, before their eyes, not one religious principle subsisting, in their hearts; but are wholly governed, and determined, by selfish motives,

tives, and worldly views; *subscription* is no bar to them. For such men, the way into the ministry of the Church is open, as men of this character will not scruple to *subscribe* any *articles of faith*, for the sake of a benefice, and to get a livelihood, the best they can. But, surely, such men, whatever their natural, or acquired endowments may be, let them be men of ever so great genius, learning, and elocution, are not fit persons to be employed in the *ministry of the gospel*; while they want the main fundamental qualifications for it, *fear of God*, and an honest, upright *heart*: Nor is it likely, that they will be of any use, or service, in promoting the end of it, in any Church. Nay, it is to be feared, that such men will rather promote the contrary end, that they will rather prejudice, than serve, the interest of *religion*; and contribute more to the advancing the *kingdom of satan*, than the *kingdom of Christ*, in the world.

The good, benevolent author of our being hath placed the true and ultimate happiness of man, considered as a rational and immortal creature, in his own power, in-

dependent of the world without him; so that, if he be wise for himself, if he be his own friend, his main interest is secure: In this no power, in the creation, visible, or invisible, can hurt him, or hinder his happiness. But a man's outward state, and condition, in this world, necessarily depends, in a great measure, on, and is greatly affected by, the behaviour and conduct of other men, with whom he hath some connexions natural or civil, private or public. In a common-wealth, *for instance*, by which, I mean any form of civil government, the *private* state of every member of it depends upon that of the *public*; and must, in some measure, be affected by it. He is therefore interested, and hath a concern, in it; so that the regard, which every man hath to his own private advantage, attaches him to the community, so far, as he is sensible his interest is connected with it's interest. And, if, he is apprehensive of any thing, that threatens the *public* weal; he may, lawfully, apprise his fellow citizens of their danger. He may caution them against it, and do what lies in his power (so he doth not use any unjustifiable methods, nor invade
another

another man's province) to prevent it; nor is he to be blamed, or charged with being a busy-body, if he makes use of this liberty, to which he hath a right, though he be but a private person, and hath no place, nor office, in *Church*, or *State*: And, though his station in life be ever so low. He is embarked. And, if the ship sinks, he must go to the bottom, with the rest, on board. Nay he not only may, but it is his duty to, do so; it is what his engagements, as a member of civil society oblige him to. And, if he does it, from a generous, public spirit; if herein he be actuated by patriotism, or a love of his country, he is to be commended; he is worthy of praise.

Though a pretence to *patriotism*, I know, is generally laughed at; and made a jest of: (so great is our degeneracy:) And he that supposes that there is in truth, any such thing among us, at present, is reckoned little better than a *fool*; or, at least, to know nothing of the world; yet I will not be ashamed to own, that (I hope) there are still some among us; whose breasts are inspired with this *principle*; who have a sincere regard,

gard, and concern for the *public* interest; for the welfare, and prosperity, of their country. If there be not, our case is desperate indeed; and the dissolution of the community, of the body politic, must be near at hand.

It is true, that we are a wicked, perverse generation; a *people laden with iniquity*. But there are those, among us, to whom the consideration of this is matter of grief and trouble; and who would heartily join, in any attempts, which have a real and visible tendency to promote a *reformation*; and advance the cause of *virtue*, and *religion*, among us; and, thereby, the interest of the *civil society*, to which they belong. It would be a happy thing, if those, who are in the administration of the *State*, and of the *Church*, would put their heads together; and consult, what methods to use, what course to take; which would be most likely to answer this desirable end; and unite, as one man, in vigorously and steddily pursuing those methods. For, if they did so, there is no doubt, but that God would bless these, their endeavours, and crown them

them with success. And it would be glorious, and honourable, to themselves. The present generation, at least, of the *righteous*, would bless them; and their names would be revered, by future generations; their memory would be dear to posterity.

GOD *speaketh once, yea twice*, as *Elibu* says, *but man perceiveth it not*. We have had many warnings, many calls from heaven, to repent, and reform. But how little have they been heeded? How little attended to, by us? When we have been under strong apprehensions of some *public* calamity, ready to befall us; we might, indeed, while in a fright, express some concern, for having offended the righteous governour of the world. As, when we thought ourselves in danger, not long since, from the accounts, which we had, of the convulsions of nature, in this our globe, the shakings of the earth, and sudden swellings of the waters, in some neighbouring countries; and in some parts of our own country; and when the public affairs of the nation were in a very uncertain, fluctuating state, before the breaking out of the present

sent war; which we were then in daily expectation of: — At that time, we, as conscious of our guilt and ill deserts, humbled ourselves before God, on a day set apart for that purpose, by our good King: and again, on another *fast-day*, since the commencement of the war; — praying to him, who judgeth in the earth, to *have mercy upon us*, and to save us from the dangers, that threatened us. But what alteration for the better doth there appear, in our lives and manners? Who can discern any good effects of our observation of those days, now remaining among us? On the contrary; we seem, as to our *moral* and *religious* character, to be growing worse and worse, and what this will end in, we have great reason to fear.

The sins of the nation have been, and still are, lamented, and complained of, by good men. Some have pointed out, and mentioned, by name, the particular sins which prevail most among us, and are reckoned the most heinous; and, therefore, as most likely to pull down the vengeance of heaven upon our guilty heads. But there is one, which

which I do not remember to have been taken notice of, by any, upon this occasion ; I mean, the *clergy's subscribing to articles*, which they do not believe ; and, in *words*, acknowledging them to be *agreeable to the word of God* ; while, in their own judgments, they are persuaded, they are not so ; yea, while they scruple not to oppugn and confute them, when they come in their way, in *conversation*, and in the *pulpit*. This is such a heinous sin, (a) both in itself, and in the circumstances attending it ; and so openly and frequently practised, that there are but few, if any, sins, committed among us, which are more alarming ; or for which we have more reason to fear the judgments of God upon this nation.

Here is *an order of men*, set apart, for religious service ; appointed to instruct others,
Y in

(a) " To profess and not believe, this is high *disimulation*, " and a horrible indignity put upon God." *Dr. Whichcot's Select Sermons, Part II. Sermon i.*

See the very different sentiments, expressed in a Sermon, intitled, *a defence of the subscriptions, required, in the Church of England*: Preached, before the university of Cambridge, on the commencement sunday, 1757. By W. S. Powell, D. D. Fellow of St. John's College.

in things pertaining to the *kingdom of heaven*; to press and exhort them to all *virtue*; and to put men in mind of this truth, that, *without holiness, no man shall see the Lord*; who, in strong contradiction to all this, do universally (except here, and there, a *Calvinist*) at their very entrance upon the ministry of the Church, what cannot be reconciled with truth and honesty, and get admission into their office, and the possession of what emoluments belong to it, through prevarication and falsehood. Why, in the world, should not the *clergy* be told of their faults, as well as the *laity*? And that with plainness, while they are not aggravated beyond the truth? For better never take any notice of them, than to palliate, or alleviate, them; or to represent them, as very excusable. This consideration, that a man is ordained to the sacred office of the *ministry* in any Church, to promote the interests of *virtue*, and true *religion*, in the world, rather magnifies than lessens any fault he is guilty of, and makes him the more deserving of reproof. God grant that both *clergy* and *laity* may amend. There is room enough for it.

“ Begin,

“ Begin, then, ye *ministers of religion* ;
“ begin ye to reform. Do what you can to
“ avert the impending judgments of heaven ;
“ to engage the *Lord of Hosts* to be on our
“ side, in the war, which we are now en-
“ gaged in : And save us from the hands of
“ our enemies. Lead the way, shew a
“ good example, and particularly remove this
“ stumbling block out of the way, which
“ will be the more to your honour ; as it
“ is well known, that the *body of the clergy*
“ hardly ever yet began, or moved for, a *re-*
“ *formation* of what wanted to be reformed,
“ among *them* ; but generally were against
“ it, when proposed by others.”

“ ’Till you repent, and make your re-
“ pentance known to the world, of this
“ your sin ; the public, open violation of the
“ sacred obligations of truth and veracity ;
“ how can you stand forth ; and, in *public*,
“ reprove other men, for their sins ? Or
“ how can you expect any success in your
“ ministry, or hope for the blessing of God
“ upon your labours in it ? ”

It is well known, that there are some, among the *clergy*, who think the insisting upon a man's *subscribing to the thirty nine articles*, before he be admitted into *priests orders*, to be a great grievance; which they would be glad to get rid of, as well as some other things, in the *constitution of the Church*; and would, no doubt, exert themselves to this purpose, had they encouragement to hope for success, in their attempts. But alas! Some of the *governours of the Church* do not seem to be willing, that any alterations should be made, in the *constitution of it*; but that all things in it should continue, as they are; or they do not care to trouble their heads about these matters; as appears from their not shewing any regard to the serious and earnest applications, which were made to them, by the authors of the *candid disquisitions*. — Having occasion now to make mention of those worthy gentlemen, I would beg leave, by the way, to put them in mind, of the engagement, which they brought themselves under, to the *public*; when they declared (I cannot remember the very words, but they were to

to this purport) “ that they would not de-
 “ sist, from pushing on the affair, which
 “ they had engaged in ; ’till they had gain-
 “ ed their point, or ’till death had silenced
 “ them.”

Bishops are not soon moved. It is strange,
 what an effect *enthronization*, as it is called,
 hath upon some of the *clergy*. They are
 soon after it, seized with a certain torpor ;
 they do not care to stir, unless it be from a
 lower *See* to an higher. They become in-
 active, in matters wherein the interest of *re-*
ligion is concerned. They do not seem to
 give much attention to the things, which
 are *Jesus Christ's*. It is strange did I say ?
 It may appear so at first sight, but, perhaps,
 it is not very difficult to be accounted for.

“ O ye fathers of the Church ! Ye *spi-*
 “ *ritual* lords and rulers ! ” —— I humbly
 beseech you ; awake, awake. —— Shake
 yourselves. Stand up ; —— stand up, like
 men, concerned for the honour of GOD,
 for the interest of *religion*, and the salvation
 of *men's souls*. —— Let these engage the
 chief attention of your minds, and let most
 of

of your time and strength be spent, in promoting these. For this is your proper province. At least, do something, for the good of the civil community, in return for the vast expence, which they are at, yearly, in maintaining you; — for the supporting, and advancing, the cause of *virtue* and *religion* among us. On the prosperous state of which, the public weal doth chiefly depend. This is what they have a right to demand from you, and to insist upon. But, if you will not, it is to be hoped the legislature of the nation will take into their consideration, the present state of *our established Church*. For, 'till there is a reformation made, in *our ecclesiastical constitution*, in vain shall we hope for a *reformation of manners*, among us,

Be that as it will; he, whose ministers you profess yourselves to be, hath demands upon you. He requires you to labour, in his vineyard. And, if you will not work, but sit idle all the day long, how do you think to come off, in the great day of account? How will you be able to stand before the tribunal of God, when he shall
judge

judge the world in righteousness, by that man, whom he hath ordained? — If you now regard not what state the *christian religion* is in, among us; — whether the *gospel* hath any influence, or not, upon the hearts and lives of those, to whom it is preached; — if you will not be prevailed with, to reform what is, in itself, a most heinous sin; what gives so great offence; what prejudices the interest of *religion*; and hinders the success of the gospel: — In what light will these things appear, to you; when the glare of riches, when the honours and grandeur of this world; when the present scene itself, shall all disappear? And a scene of a different nature shall take place?

Out of a sincere love to you, to the true Church of Christ; to the community, and to mankind, I most heartily wish, and pray, that you may exert yourselves, with vigour, towards rectifying what is amiss; now, before it is too late. And may the blessing of Almighty God abundantly succeed you, — and make you happy for-ever.

T H E E N D.

BOOKS Printed and sold by JAMES
WAUGH, at the *Turk's-Head*, in *Lombard-street*.

I. THE history of the first planting of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION: taken from the acts of the apostles, and their epistles. Together with the remarkable facts of the *jewish* and *roman* history; which affected the christians, within this period. In three volumes, quarto. The second edition, carefully corrected, and with large additions. Price bound 17s.

II. A paraphrase and notes on six of the epistles of St. Paul, viz.

I *Thessalonians*, } } I *Timothy*, } } *Titus*,

II *Thessalonians*, } } *Philemon*, } } II *Timothy*,

Attempted in imitation of Mr. *Locke's* manner. To which, are annexed, critical dissertations on several subjects, for the better understanding of St. *Paul's* epistles. The second edition, carefully corrected, with large additions, quarto. Price bound 17s.

III. A paraphrase and notes on the seven (commonly called) *catholic* epistles; quarto. viz.

St. *James*, } } II St. *Peter*, } } I, II, and III.

I St. *Peter*, } } St. *Jude*, } } Of St. *John*.

Attempted in imitation of Mr. *Locke's* manner; to which are annexed several critical dissertations. By George Benson, D. D. Price bound 17s

A Paraphrase with Notes on the Epistle to the *Romans*. To which is prefixed a key to the apostolic writings, or an essay to explain the Gospel-scheme, and the principal words and phrases the apostles have used in describing it. By John Taylor, D. D. Price 10s. 6d.

The Works of the late Reverend Mr. Henry Grove, complete in twelve volumes, octavo. Price bound 3l. 2s.



